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John Dickerson, Anthony Salvanto

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JOHN DICKERSON, CBS HOST: Today on FACE THE NATION, we will talk to both vice presidential candidates, as the tone of campaign 2016 hits rock bottom.

With just over three weeks to go until Election Day, at least nine women have accused Donald Trump of making unwanted advances, some charging outright assault. And the fallout has sent Trump into a flurry of counterpunches.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: False stories, all made up, lies, lies, no witnesses, no nothing, all big lies. It`s a rigged system.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

DICKERSON: Hillary Clinton faces an avalanche of e-mails hacked from her campaign chairman that shows the behind-the-scenes maneuvering of a presidential campaign.

Both Mike Pence and Tim Kaine will join us.

Then we will go in-depth on both stories. Key conservatives will talk about the state of their movement, as Trump causes a rift in the Republican Party. And veteran journalists join us to talk about hacked e-mails and the way Washington works.

Plus, our new Battleground Tracker poll shows a big shift among women voters.

It`s all coming up on FACE THE NATION.

Good morning, and welcome to FACE THE NATION. I`m John Dickerson.

Our new Battleground Tracker shows a dramatic shift in key 13 states we`re watching here at CBS News. The candidates were tied last month. Now Hillary Clinton is ahead 46 to 40 percent over Donald Trump. That jump is due to gains from women voters. Clinton has gone from a five-point edge in September to a 15-point advantage now, this following a videotape where Trump boasts about groping women and allegations this week from nine women that he did just that over the last 35 years.

We will hear from both vice presidential candidates, starting with Donald Trump`s running mate, Indiana Governor Mike Pence, who is campaigning in Tampa.

Welcome, Governor. I want to start with these allegations.

GOV. MIKE PENCE (R-IN), VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Thank you, John.

DICKERSON: We have the tape from last week. Now nine women have come forward basically claiming Donald Trump behaved just as he said in private.

Shouldn`t voters at least pay attention to this and try and figure this out? I mean, isn`t the -- are they crazy to think there might not be something there?

PENCE: Well, I think Donald Trump did what he needed to do last weekend.

You know, I spoke out in my concern about the 11-year-old video that came forward. He went before the American people and said that he apologized to his family and he apologized to the people of this country and said he was embarrassed about what he heard said 11 years ago. But he made it clear that it was just talk, not actions.

And in the days that followed, I know there have been unsubstantiated allegations that have been made, but Donald Trump has made it clear that he categorically denies those allegations. And we`re going to continue to focus this campaign on, frankly, where the people of this country are focused, John.

Over the course of this last week and in the midst of all of these issues swirling in the national media, I can tell you that the crowds that I saw here in Florida over the last several day, the crowds that gathered with him in New Hampshire and Maine last night are focused on a stronger America at home and abroad, about reversing a course that`s literally set wider parts of the world spinning apart under the foreign policy of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, and frankly the policies that have stifled the American economy, particularly as it pertains to -- as it pertains to health care.

DICKERSON: Let me ask you, Governor...

PENCE: And Donald Trump has a message that is enlivening, and it is resonating with people all across this country. And we`re going the fight the next 23 days to carry it all the way through Election Day.

DICKERSON: Let me ask you this, Governor. You have spoken a lot in your career about character of the candidates, not relative to each other, but just relative to a standard.

In 1992, Bill Clinton said, "I feel your pain." He was in touch with the voters. He spoke for them. And Democrats said that is what was important, not these character questions. It sounds like you`re making a version of the same case for Donald Trump.

PENCE: Well, not so.

Obviously, history records that Bill Clinton didn`t just talk about doing things, that he did them. It took a while to find all that out. He was under oath in 1998. And he finally came clean on having taken advantage of a 23-year-old intern at the White House named Monica Lewinsky, and in the most appalling behavior by an American president in the history of this country.

Look, Donald Trump has made it very clear that he deeply regrets those words that he used 11 years ago, that they don`t represent who he is, and that he has categorically denied these unsubstantiated allegations.

(CROSSTALK)

PENCE: What is really remarkable, though, John -- what is really remarkable, though, John, is in a week where you have this series of unsubstantiated allegations, and, of course, there is competing evidence that`s coming out regarding these particular incidents, we have an avalanche of hard evidence and about Hillary Clinton`s years as secretary of state and the Clinton Foundation.

We found out this week, because of another network`s efforts, that while she was secretary of state, Hillary Clinton actually -- her team directed contracts for the reconstruction of Haiti after the earthquake to friends of the Clintons.

This is exactly the kind of political favoritism that she said wasn`t happening.

(CROSSTALK)

DICKERSON: I want to ask you about your candidate, Governor.

PENCE: And it`s being largely ignored by this network and largely ignored by the mainstream national media, John. And the American people, frankly, see right through it.

DICKERSON: Let me ask you, Governor, about your candidate has responded to these allegations using the word sick. Talking about the people who are making the allegations, says they`re sick, horrible, phony.

And he says that one of the women would not be his first choice. One of the claims you`re making about Hillary Clinton is the way she treated Bill Clinton`s accusers. Donald Trump is treating these accusers pretty roughly himself.

PENCE: Well, Donald Trump has made it clear that he categorically denies the allegations that have been made against him this week.

DICKERSON: But what about the treatment of these people coming forward, sir?

PENCE: Well, but, John, what about...

DICKERSON: Sick, Governor?

PENCE: What about calling half of our -- half of our supporters a basket of deplorables?

(CROSSTALK)

DICKERSON: So, it`s OK if Hillary Clinton does it? Is it -- two wrongs make a right?

PENCE: What about...

(CROSSTALK)

PENCE: .... this week that came out with the most anti-Catholic, anti- evangelical rhetoric that I have ever seen by anybody in a high position in public life?

I mean, John, honestly, the reason why you see the resilience in our numbers around the country, the reason why you see such determination of the American people is, frankly, people see an overwhelming bias in the national media, a willful ignorance about an avalanche of hard evidence about Hillary Clinton and the Clinton Foundation and her years as secretary of state, and end up putting above the fold and leading the news with these unconfirmed, unsubstantiated allegations.

And I think it`s -- it, frankly, is why we`re just going to continue to fight every single day between now and Election Day to change the direction of this country.

DICKERSON: I understand.

PENCE: The American people feel -- the American people feel like, in a very real sense, that the Democrat Party and many of you in the media are working together to present -- prevent the kind of change the American people long to see of a stronger and more prosperous America. And we`re going to fight our way all the way to Election Day.

DICKERSON: I appreciate that, Governor.

I`m trying to deal with what the -- what your candidate is saying on the stump in real time right now. Another thing he`s saying is that the election is rigged. My question is, is that a responsible thing for a candidate to say?

PENCE: Well, I think what Donald Trump is talking about is, frankly, what appears to be the monolithic support of the national media for Hillary Clinton`s campaign, their willful ignorance about the avalanche of hard evidence, not allegations, John, but hard evidence now coming out in these e-mails of collusion and pay-for-play politics.

And the American people are just tired of it.

DICKERSON: Governor...

(CROSSTALK)

PENCE: Look, we will respect the outcome of this election, John.

Well, let me be very clear. Donald Trump said in the first debate that we will respect the will of the American people in this election. The peaceful transfer of power is a hallmark of American history. And elections get really tough.

But the American people are getting awful tired of this two-on-one fight, with many of you in the national media doing half of Hillary Clinton`s work for her every day. All we`re asking for is while -- whatever you want to report about our campaign, let`s get out there, let`s let the facts speak for themselves.

But let`s get before the American people this avalanche of e-mails that is confirming pay-to-play politics and outright corruption during the Clinton years.

(CROSSTALK)

DICKERSON: Before we run out of time, Governor, let me ask you a question, though.

When Donald Trump talks about a rigged election, here`s the way one of his supporters hears that. This is a quote from "The Boston Globe" from a Trump supporter, who said: "I`m going to go right up behind them" -- talking about being at polling places -- Donald Trump has encouraged his supporters to watch the places -- "I will do everything legally. I want to see if they`re accountable. I`m not going to do anything illegal. I`m going to make them a little bit nervous."

That`s what -- the way they`re hearing about rigged elections. Do you condone that kind of behavior?

PENCE: Well, I -- certainly not.

I don`t think any American should ever attempt to make any other American nervous in the exercise of their franchise to vote. But, look, states like my state of Indiana manage our election process. Poll watching is a part of that process. And it`s a message that I have delivered around this country.

People that are concerned about this election and about us preserving the one person, one vote that`s at the very center of our American democracy should become involved, should volunteer at their neighborhood polling place. That`s how we ensure the accountability.

Frankly, that`s how we protect the integrity of the vote for Republicans, Democrats, independents. Everyone across the spectrum is served when we ensure that we have free and honest elections.

DICKERSON: All right, Governor. OK, Governor, thanks so much. We have run out of time, Governor Mike Pence.

PENCE: Thank you, John.

DICKERSON: And now to the other candidate for vice president, Virginia Senator Tim Kaine, who joins us from Miami.

Senator, you and your campaign have talked about these hacked e-mails of Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta as coming from the influence or having the influence of the Russian government.

SEN. TIM KAINE (D-VA), VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Right.

DICKERSON: If Secretary Clinton were president, what would she do to retaliate against the Russians?

KAINE: Well, I have not talked with Hillary about this, but there does need to be a consequence.

When a foreign nation tries to destabilize an American election, which is what Donald Trump encouraged back in late July, he said, hey, Russia, go see if you can cyber-hack and find things that will help me win, but when a foreign government tries to do this, there has to be a consequence.

There will be time for figuring that -- what that consequence is, but you can`t let it go unchallenged, because, if you do, you just -- could encourage more of it.

DICKERSON: Do you see any link between the Trump campaign and these disclosures that have come out?

KAINE: I can`t discern any direct link, except for Donald Trump`s encouragement.

It was, I think, during the week of the convention in Philadelphia Donald Trump took a stage, and he basically said, hey, I would encourage cyber- hackers. Russia, see if you can find information on Hillary Clinton that will help me win.

You know, that was shocking. Later, when he was challenged about it, he said, well, I was just being sarcastic.

I don`t think it`s funny when you have a nation like Russia that has engaged in activity to destabilize elections in countries, Ukraine, Estonia, they have engaged in that activity, and somebody running to be president of the United States shouldn`t be encouraging another nation to cyber-hack the U.S.

DICKERSON: When you look at these e-mails and this hacked cache of e-mail, there`s a lot of effort to tell the voters a different story than what Hillary Clinton`s apparent position is on issues from trade to the XL pipeline, efforts to dodge, using a word from the e-mails, on the question of the e-mail server.

Don`t voters have a right to get the straight story from a candidate who is asking to be given so much power?

KAINE: Well, I think you can -- and you can ask the people involved in any of the e-mails what they think about the topics.

John, here`s something that we do have to just state very plainly: Not only are these e-mails an effort by WikiLeaks and Russia to try to destabilize our election, but, second, you can`t assume that they`re all accurate.

One of the e-mails that came up this week referred to me. It was completely inaccurate. And I don`t know whether it was inaccurate because the sender didn`t know what he or she was talking about or it had been doctored. But anybody who is going to try to cyber-attack and then try to destabilize an election, you can`t trust that they`re going to maintain scrupulous honesty about the content of what they`re dumping out for the world to see.

DICKERSON: When people look at the WikiLeaks e-mails, is it the standard of the truthfulness in those conversations that we should expect from the Clinton administration?

KAINE: Well, look, I`m not spending a lot of time looking at them, for the reason that I stated earlier. I don`t even assume that they`re all accurate.

DICKERSON: Let me ask you this, Senator. There`s -- you and others in your campaign have compared this to Watergate, said that the Trump campaign shouldn`t be making hay about these hacked e-mails, which are essentially stolen.

But the Clinton made a lot of hay about Donald Trump`s tax returns, which was disclosed without his knowledge or willingness. Why aren`t -- you making hay of that, and now they`re making hay of this?

KAINE: Well, look, they can -- they choose how the run the campaign. If they want the make hay, they can.

But here`s one thing we ought to demand of Donald Trump. Every time this comes up that these WikiLeaks, Russia documents are connected to Russia, he is the only one standing on the stage to defend Russia: Well, we don`t know that Russia was involved. It might be a big guy sitting in his parents` basement.

And he -- over and over again, he is defending Russia on this, as if Russia isn`t involved, even though the director of national intelligence and Justice Department and FBI officials have connected Russia to these attacks.

Why does Donald Trump keep going out of his way to defend Russia on it? He should condemn Russia. In fact, it`s even been reported that he`s received intelligence assessments laying these attacks at Russia`s feet, but, for some reason, he seems to want to defend Vladimir Putin. I don`t get it.

He can make hay of whatever he wants to, but I think he ought to, instead of making weird claims that our election is rigged and challenging the integrity of the American electoral process, he should be standing up against people who are trying to destabilize our elections.

DICKERSON: But the Clinton campaign is saying the Trump campaign is doing something wrong by talking about this. And if that`s the case, then were you wrong to be talking about his leaked tax returns?

KAINE: No, because, look, I`m not saying Trump is wrong to be talking about this. That`s not me, and I don`t know that we`re really saying that.

Donald Trump made a promise to the voters in 2014: If I run, I`m going to release my tax returns.

And, secondly, as you know, that is the precedent for all in the modern era to release them. "The New York Times" has a story that has some information about Donald Trump`s taxes. And we think the information essentially confirms what Donald Trump himself said on a debate stage. When Hillary Clinton said, you probably don`t pay taxes, Donald Trump said, yes, that makes me smart.

Hey, there`s a whole lot of us out here who pay taxes to support our military and to support our veterans, and we don`t like being called stupid by a guy like Donald Trump, who brags about not paying taxes and stiffing our troops and stiffing veterans.

DICKERSON: With respect to Donald Trump and these accusations about his behavior, you have mentioned that it shows a pattern of behavior on Donald Trump`s part.

But that`s what Democrats defended against with Bill Clinton in 1992. Republicans say these allegations represent a pattern of behavior and that means he shouldn`t with president. So, if it was good enough to defend Bill Clinton to say there is a separation, why isn`t that a good enough defense for Donald Trump?

KAINE: Well, first, Bill Clinton is not on the ballot. This is a race between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

And, second, look, I don`t reach a conclusion about any particular allegation. But you do have to look at Donald Trump`s own words and actions. The tape that came out two Fridays ago that was -- kind of created this bombshell was not somebody else saying something about Donald Trump. It was Donald Trump telling everybody: This is the way I treat women.

And then, in the debate stage last Sunday, he was asked point blank, did you act in accord with what you said? And he didn`t want to answer that question. He tried to avoid it a couple of times, but Anderson Cooper pinned him down, and he looked at the camera and he said: No, I never acted that way. I talked about it. I never did it.

Well, you know, when you look America in the face and say that, then suddenly people are coming up here, there, all over the country, saying, no, actually, that is the way Donald Trump acts.

And it shouldn`t be surprising, given the way he`s talked about women from the beginning of the campaign and throughout his career, and frankly the way he`s talked about others as well. People can reach their own conclusion about it.

But when somebody`s actions are so closely connected to how he says he acts, I mean, I think people will draw the conclusion that Donald Trump`s got a real problem in this area.

DICKERSON: Senator, one other question about e-mail. There have been some reports that you have been e-mailing Hillary Clinton during the campaign and she you about various things.

Why, given all the hacking that`s going on, would anybody communicate by e- mail?

KAINE: You know, that`s a really good question, John.

I think all of us, until I can find a carrier pigeon that`s really fast, you know, we have got to communicate, and we`re not always together in person, and so sometimes we talk by phone. And sometimes we e-mail. But I think we`re all very mindful of the fact that our e-mails could be displayed in an inaccurate or highly altered version for the world to see. And then we act accordingly in what we decide to send.

DICKERSON: Senator Kaine, thanks for being with us.

KAINE: All right. Thanks a lot.

DICKERSON: The speaker of the House won`t defend Donald Trump. The Senate majority leader won`t mention his name. What`s happening to the Republican Party?

We will talk about that in one minute.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: We have gathered some key voices in the conservative movement to discuss what`s being called the civil war in the Republican Party.

Dr. Russell Moore is president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. Alfonso Aguilar is the president of the Latino Partnership for Conservative Principles. Tammy Bruce is a radio talk show host and a FOX News contributor, and Matt Schlapp is the chairman of the American Conservative Union.

Tammy, I want to start with you.

TAMMY BRUCE, RADIO TALK SHOW HOST: Sure.

DICKERSON: Let`s diagnose. We`re all going to diagnose the moment, or you all are all going to diagnose the moment.

What`s the state of the conservative movement inside the Republican Party?

BRUCE: You know, those two are very different these days, are aren`t they?

I`m very much a conservative. I`m an independent voter, though. What I can tell you is, is that Donald Trump is the nominee for a reason. It`s because of the failure of the Republican Party to stop the destruction of the country by the Democrats.

I can tell you that 3.7 million women have been pushed into poverty since Barack Obama became president. According to the CEO of Gallup, about 25 million economic lives have been destroyed; 48 percent of Americans have a full-time job. That is the lowest since 1983.

So, when you look at the Republicans and what conservatives have expected from the Republican Party is to push back on issues and policies and laws that destroy people`s lives. They have not done that. And what they`re reaping now from I think the beginning of the Tea Party, let`s say, in 2009 is a reaction and a rejection by the American people.

They ignored it then. They should have embraced it and routinized it. They ignored it in `10, in `14. They`re ignoring it now. Donald Trump is the result of being ignored and of the American people wanting people`s lives to get better and for the actual conservative ideal of economic freedom to prevail, which is the only thing that will save our lives.

DICKERSON: Alfonso, your diagnosis?

ALFONSO AGUILAR, PRESIDENT, LATINO PARTNERSHIP FOR CONSERVATIVE PRINCIPLES: Oh, I agree partly with that.

I think that I wouldn`t overstate the impact of Donald Trump in terms of his impact in the conservative movement. The differences that I think Tammy was talking about predate Donald Trump. And I think we can oversimplify it and say that, on the one hand, we have an establishment that`s too willing to give up principle, too tied to big interests, and then good conservatives who care deeply about the issues, but may be too rigid sometimes.

And in terms of the economy and income inequality and the wounds that American workers are facing, they`re too quick to blame trade and **immigration**. And that`s a problem. But the good news is that, between those two extremes, there are many Republicans who I think, after this election, can steer the party and the movement in the right direction.

DICKERSON: But, at the moment, Russell Moore, we have an election going on, and you have a speaker of the House who says he won`t defend Donald Trump, and you have -- Mitch McConnell won`t say his name. How do you see things?

RUSSELL MOORE, PRESIDENT, ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION, SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION: Well, I think that`s exactly what we see at the grassroots level.

Even when I`m talking to people who support Donald Trump, they do so with a conflicted conscience, and they do so with a certain sense of fear and trembling. But many of them are doing so that I talk to right now, especially evangelical Christians, not because they think he will win. They think he will lose, but because they are wanting to protest against a Hillary Clinton presidency, which will be awful and disastrous for many of the things that we`re concerned about.

But one of the things that concerns me is the personal and spiritual devastation that we see happening in this election. There are friendships that have broken apart. There are husbands and wives who don`t speak to each other about the election right now. And there are people who are going through a genuine sense of despair about the future of the country and about the future of their own lives when they look at the kind of cultural coarsening that would lead us to a situation where, on the left, people are saying the situations with the Clinton Foundation and the e- mails don`t matter, and, on the right, there are some people who are saying these comments about women are just locker room talk.

DICKERSON: I want to get to that in a moment, but...

MATT SCHLAPP, FORMER WHITE HOUSE DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS: I guess we`re all living through the Clinton marriage. That`s what you`re really saying.

DICKERSON: What`s your diagnosis, Matt?

SCHLAPP: Much -- I agree with much of what my friends here have said.

I just think, yes, Obama, we have got to give him great credit. He got almost all his agenda through. While doing that, he has taken more legislative powers away from Congress. We have a constitutional crisis on our separation of powers.

It`s not all the Republicans` fault in Congress. He went around them. You know, he has been overturned more times by the federal court, this person who used to teach constitutional law, than any other president. He has put us in this kind of constitutional crisis.

Obama deserves much credit for Trump as well, because name the bipartisan issue of substance that he was really able to work with the other side on to try to solve a big problem? Was it entitlements? No. Was it Obamacare? No. Democratic votes.

He made big missteps for the country. It helped him politically, but the country finds itself divided like never before, and that`s not what Obama ran on.

DICKERSON: All right.

We will come back and try and figure out how the Republicans, not Obama and the Democrats, handle this in just a moment.

We will take a break. Stay with us. We will be back with more from our panel.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: Stay with us. We have got a lot more FACE THE NATION coming up.

And be sure to join us Wednesday night at 9:00 Eastern for the final presidential debate. I will be there at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, along with my colleagues, including "CBS THIS MORNING" co-host Norah O`Donnell, and Gayle King, plus Bob Schieffer, for our live debate coverage.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: Some of our CBS stations are leaving us now, but, for most of you, we will be right back with more of our conversation with conservatives, plus an all-star Washington panel with Bob Woodward of "The Washington Post," Maureen Dowd of "The New York Times" and others.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: Welcome back to FACE THE NATION. I`m John Dickerson.

Russell, I want to start -- go back to something you said about this locker room talk.

When there are indelible moments that are happening here that some conservatives I talk to say we can`t get back from.

And on this question of character, you`ve got people saying, you know, what Donald Trump said was just what gets said in any old locker room, normalizing that behavior.

I`ve spent a lot of time covering conservatives who talk a lot about character.

What happened to the character question?

MOORE: Well, I think what we`re seeing right now is that the -- the warnings of the old religious right have actually come true about the coarsening of a culture. And I remember watching Bill Clinton on television dismissing, essentially, what happened with Monica Lewinsky, even when he admitted to it and then attacking Ken Starr and thinking aren`t the Democrats going to be morally outraged by this?

And they weren`t.

Now, we`re seeing a situation where you have horrific talk about sexual assault and boasting and glorying in these things, which again, isn`t a one-off. This has been happening for a long time in the way he`s been talking. And you see people trying to -- to dismiss it as just locker room talk or this -- this is alpha male, as one person said, this is just the way that men talk.

I`m hearing from a lot of women who are horrified, not -- not just about what happened with Donald Trump. They know that Donald Trump is about.

But by leaders who are silent or who are dismissive about this.

I think that -- forget what`s happening in this election. That is going to have a long-term implication for the rest of the country.

DICKERSON: Tammy, address that idea of leaders being silent. But then also, Donald Trump has talked about his accusers -- I mean he`s used some pretty tough words about those accusers and then evaluated them on their attractiveness...

BRUCE: Yes.

DICKERSON: -- which seems to be the thing that got him in the trouble in the first place.

BRUCE: Yes, it`s really good we`re not electing a husband or a boyfriend, isn`t it?

You know, we`re electing a president who is -- I look at him, actually, as if you`re in the ambulance and you`re going to the trauma center and there`s a trauma surgeon, I`m not particularly care how that person is going to be speaking. That person is going to get you to be able to live another day, to be able to get out of that emergency room, to be able to function the next day.

Now, look, I can tell you that the Obamas probably have the best marriage since the Reagans in the White House. Mr. Obama clearly does not offend anyone when it comes to the nature of how he speaks about women or people.

This nation is now going down the drain. And while I would prefer to have President Reagan back, we don`t.

So what I`m looking at is I`m voting for President Trump for -- for Mr. Trump for the thousands of women who deserve to not be murdered, as an example, by the one of the 1.2 million illegal criminals -- illegal **alien** criminals in this nation.

There is violence. It`s about economic freedom. It`s about the jobs. Again, I mentioned earlier the 3.7 million women in poverty now, since Obama became president. So yes, of course we would prefer fabulousness at every level. From Mr. Trump, I prefer to be offended by him on occasion than be left for dead by Hillary.

SCHLAPP: John, this -- you know, you -- we keep going to this question about what is somebody who is -- believes in strong traditional values in the culture?

I agree so much with what you said about the fact that what we said was going to happen in the culture has happened in the culture.

But what I -- when I talk to people of faith, first of all, they`re completely offended by the emails that were released about them mocking Catholics and Christians. That was reprehensible. And we should cover that more.

But second of all, Christians are no longer necessarily saying we`re going to overturn "Roe v. Wade," we`re going to bring back traditional marriage, we`re going to have prayer in the classroom. We don`t even talk about prayer -- you know what they want, John? they want to be left alone with their First Amendment rights to be able to practice their faith fully on the -- in -- in the job, in their home, in the raising of their children, convince -- make -- forcing nuns to buy contraception and these strange permutations that the Obama-Clinton policies have us in have Christian voters -- voters of faith in a different position.

They will support, in many cases, not all cases, someone like Donald Trump, because he think -- they think he will stand up and fight.

AGUILAR: Look -- look, I -- I think it`s more complicated than that. And, look, inside the beltway, I hear a lot of strategists say this is a binary choice. You know, if you want Hillary Clinton and want her bad policies, the -- the Supreme Court being controlled by liberal judicial activist judges then -- then, you know, you have to vote for Trump.

But the truth is, in America, different from other countries -- this is not Italy, where you have Silvio Berlusconi doing something, you know, and -- with women and then his polls -- poll numbers go up.

This is America and character counts. We`ve always considered character as paramount. The president of the United States is a moral reference.

So, yes, I`m appalled at Hillary Clinton, her scandals, her lies. But we have to vote. But to choose Donald Trump just because he`s the anti- Hillary, I just think that a lot of us are going to come out and just leave that part of the ballot blank.

I -- look, we had too many candidates in this primary. Despite our differences, the frustration here is that despite our differences, we know that if we had a serious candidate, we should be winning this election with all the scandals and everything that`s coming out of WikiLeaks.

She -- her candidate -- candidacy would have been derailed.

DICKERSON: Russell, the -- on the -- if I`m a Republican -- and a lot have broken with the nominee after this tape came out -- is -- I mean who is taking the moral position -- the better moral position, the person who says I have a fixed set of standards, these break those, I won`t support that person?

Or the person who says, I`m going to support Donald Trump, he`s the nominee of my party -- I`m -- I`m pledged to the party, and therefore, I`m going to submit him?

Who has the moral high ground?

MOORE: Well, I can understand the person who`s wrestling with his or her conscience and saying I`m going to choose one of the other of these because of a lesser of two evils approach. I don`t agree with that, but I can understand why someone would do that.

I think that`s very different than people who are standing up and saying, well, we`re not electing a pastor, we`re not electing a Sunday school teacher, we`re not electing a choir boy, we`re electing someone who is -- who is simply going to be as mean and as tough as possible. And to act as though we fight lack of integrity and character with moral lack of integrity and character, I think that is going to have problems...

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: But look, we can`t avoid the fact that...

(CROSSTALK)

BRUCE: -- spoke directly to my comment, though, about who we`re electing. When you talk a -- I think it is important to think about women and character when we move forward.

But when we talk about the issue about jobs, about the nature of who`s going to build up the business in this country, the issue of regulations, of taxes, that is -- you want to talk about an assault on women?

The assault on women is destroying small businesses, making -- having women live in their parents` basement until they`re 30.

(CROSSTALK)

BRUCE: The -- the destruction of health care, our hospitals and doctors. So this does matter. And -- and it is about hiring someone, at this point, because we`re in an -- in an existential battle for the future.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: But let me...

BRUCE: So for every woman watching who`s making a decision, yes, vote with women in mind, and vote with the future in mind for yourself and your daughters, because this is the character that matters. It`s surviving so that we can continue the greatness of the country.

DICKERSON: (INAUDIBLE), let me set the question up, taking what Tammy said, is that the -- the charge I hear is that this -- these don`t happen in silos, that when you don`t respect the boundaries on the character front, that your ability to solve things in just the way Tammy suggests is actually also eroded. That was the -- the claim that`s been made in other character instances.

So why isn`t that the case here?

SCHLAPP: I`m with the doctor on this. I think that your character matters. And I don`t think you can kind of privatize your character. And I think it does permeate to what kind of president you`re going to be.

And what I know and what I`ve seen of Donald Trump is he`s somebody who looked at the last seven and a half years of Barack Obama and he woke up and got a lot more serious. And he realized his country was going down the drain.

And I think he`s lived a big flamboyant life. I`m sure he`s done tons of things we would all object to.

But the fact is is this, as he says, he is who he is. With the Clintons, let`s just be honest. They say two for one. She says Bill Clinton will run the economy. He was impeached. They were dead broke because they paid $850,000 to Paula Jones. They paid over a million dollars in fines and settlements and fees. He was disbarred. He wasn`t allowed to go to the Supreme Court.

BRUCE: And she (INAUDIBLE)...

SCHLAPP: The idea that the Clintons would make the moral case...

BRUCE: Yes.

SCHLAPP: -- and the character case is absurd.

BRUCE: But she has bragged.

SCHLAPP: And I think...

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: (INAUDIBLE) realized that.

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: But it...

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It`s a choice. It`s -- it`s standard.

(CROSSTALK)

BRUCE: But she`s bragging in the WikiLeaks about the importance of being two-faced.

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: -- a private and a public...

(CROSSTALK)

MOORE: I agree completely on the Clintons.

BRUCE: It`s extraordinary.

MOORE: But if this is more serious on the Trump side, then I think many Americans are saying what have we come to?

BRUCE: But the Obama...

(CROSSTALK)

BRUCE: -- marriage and character disputes that about the nature of what`s going to save this country. And perhaps, even just for four years, the steps we need to take to right her.

DICKERSON: OK, we`re going to have to leave it there.

I want to thank our panelists.

And we`re going to talk next about hacking and emails and all the other news in the political world.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: And we`ve assembled an all star panel this morning to talk politics.

Maureen Dowd is a "New York Times" op-ed columnist for "The New York Times." And her new book out is called "The Year of Voting Dangerously."

Bob Woodward`s latest book is "The Last of the President`s Men."

Jon Meacham is the author of "Destiny and Power" and he`s the executive editor at Random House.

And David Ignatius is a columnist for "The Washington Post."

Jon Meacham, I want to start with you about a piece you wrote in "The New York Times" about the difference between George H.W. Bush, about whom you`ve written, "Destiny and Power," and the current Republican nominee.

Jon Meacham, I want to start with you about a piece you wrote in "The New York Times" about the difference between George Herbert Walker Bush, about whom you`ve written, "Destiny and Power," and the current Republican nominee.

JON MEACHAM, EXECUTIVE EDITOR, RANDOM HOUSE: Yes.

DICKERSON: That is a big difference in a pretty short time period.

MEACHAM: To paraphrase Henry Adams, the movement from George H.W. Bush to Donald Trump disproves Darwin. You know, it`s a remarkable descent, whether you agreed or disagreed with George H.W. Bush politically. He was a figure of enormous public grace and dignity and empathy.

He knew how to play politics. He knew how to hire tough people. He ran a tough campaign in 1988. So this is not a case for Saint George or Kennebunkport.

What it is a case for is that this was a man who, when confronted by the vicissitudes of politics, he almost always did the right thing and tried to put the country first.

DICKERSON: Where -- what do you make of where we are right now?

You`ve got Donald Trump out there talking about a rigged election with 23 days to go before.

How do you -- how do you see Trump in the -- in this week of history?

BOB WOODWARD, "THE WASHINGTON POST": Well, I frequently disagree with Jon, but I agree on this. I mean this -- this is a -- an amazing appalling election and the idea that we are reduced to the discussion of when did he grope and who did he grope and what did he grope is absurd. And it -- it is a true shame for the voters that people are not getting answers to questions like how might you use military force, what`s the job of the CIA, how would you organize your White House?

How do you keep from letting the White House become a bunker with an isolated president?

Those things don`t come up.

DICKERSON: Maureen, you covered Bill Clinton and now you`ve -- you`re watching this unfold.

Donald Trump responded to his -- to his accusers by calling them sick, by suggesting that one of them wasn`t attractive enough for his attentions.

How -- where do you -- how do you see this?

(LAUGHTER)

MAUREEN DOWD, OP-ED COLUMNIST, "THE NEW YORK TIMES": Well, it`s funny because Bob said to me once, we went to the premier of the movie "Nixon" and he said that every president gets the psychoanalyst he deserves.

(LAUGHTER)

DOWD: So -- but now the whole country has -- have -- has become psychoanalysts. We`re all trying to analyze Trump`s behavior. And he brought, you know, some women who were Bill Clinton accusers and sat them in front of Hillary Clinton for the debate, which I think was one of the most bizarre things any of us have ever seen.

And his argument was that they hadn`t, you know, been treated as credible enough.

And then when he has this cascade of women accessing him, he just suddenly, you know, begins trashing them and saying they can`t be believed.

And he doesn`t understand there`s no logic in Trump-world. He lives in his own alternative universe where logic doesn`t apply.

And as one of his good friends said, Donald does as Donald wants.

DICKERSON: David, I want to ask you about this question of Russian hacking the emails, the other -- the story we`ve been talking about today.

First of all, what does the U.S. government think about what`s actually happened, the role -- the connection between the Russian government and what we`ve seen coming out of WikiLeaks?

DAVID IGNATIUS, COLUMNIST, "THE WASHINGTON POST": Since July, which is when the first evidence that the Russians had hacked the Democratic National Committee`s servers, there`s been a big debate within the Obama administration about how best to respond. And after a lot of back and forth, the decision was made, we need to state as much of what we know publicly as we can.

So a week ago, we had a formal statement by the director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, and the secretary of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, essentially accessing Russia of having stolen these emails and then put them into our political debate in an election year for the purpose destabilizing it.

Then, on another network show today, we have the vice president, Joe Biden, taking it a step further and saying that we intend to send a message to the Russians through our actions not to do this ever again. And when he`s pressed, he kind of smiles and says he hopes the public won`t know about it, implying that this will be covert action.

I`m told this morning by government officials that no action has yet been taken by the United States. There were some stories out immediately after the first accounts of -- of what Biden said, suggesting that it had already begun.

Apparently it hasn`t. And they`re still debating what will be most efficacious?

What do you do that deters the Russians without hurting yourself even more in the process?

So, John, I think that debate will continue. They just -- I think they want to prevent the Russians from doing even more in this last month of the election.

DICKERSON: I`ve been talking to Clinton officials and they bring up the word Watergate.

WOODWARD: Yes.

DICKERSON: And so I ask you, they say if Nixon had said, oh, this is great, what they`ve found by breaking in and I`m going to use this in my campaign, it would have been pretty shocking. They say people should be equally shocked at -- at the Trump campaign using, to good benefit, the findings of this hacking process.

WOODWARD: Well, but that -- Watergate was a domestic crime, clearly a crime. In -- in this case, it`s espionage, at least at -- at this point.

But I think you still have to look at what the emails tell us. I by no means have read them all, but I`ve read some. And there was one where I think Hillary Clinton`s chief speechwriter sent to Cheryl Mills, the chief of staff in the State Department, saying oh, Hillary is changing her position on the Keystone Pipeline and let`s leak that so she won`t have to say it herself publicly.

Now, this is this culture of concealment, the failure to have straight talk. And it`s quite likely Hillary Clinton is going to win and be the next president.

And I think the question becomes, for her and for voters, is she going to be able to govern?

You talk to lots of people who are her supporters and they say, you know, she may be elected, but will be a weak president.

And part of this is she`s got to kind of face -- and this isn`t just about Trump, it`s about her. The majority of the people distrust her and she needs to -- she can`t walk away from that question.

DICKERSON: Maureen, did you, in these emails, when you see what Bob is talking about, the XL Pipeline, trade, other things where they`re shifting and shading, trying to hide her -- or divert, does that look to you like politics as usual, what we see in all administrations?

Or is this something that`s particular with the Clinton administration or Clinton folks?

DOWD: Well, it`s hard, because the, you know, the crazy transgressions of Donald Trump kind of, relatively speaking, make this seem minor. I think it would have been more lethal during the primary, but the part, to me, that`s almost poignant is Hillary Clinton has been trying for 25 years to show who she is to the public and getting memos from her staff.

So we see the same memos from her staff now that she got in `92, saying we`re going to -- in `92, it was we`re going to have a spontaneous -- they`re always scripting spontaneity...

(LAUGHTER)

DOWD: -- right?

(LAUGHTER)

DOWD: So we`re going to have this spontaneous moment where Bill and Chill -- and Chelsea surprise you on Mother`s Day.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Right.

DOWD: So now, we have Neera Tanden sending one saying, "We`re going to have like an end of summer party where you`ll groove to the music," she can groove to the music and she can have a beer and, you know, it`s just kind of sad. They have, you know, they have off the record answers sort of scripted out for her for reporters with the cue to smile.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Right.

DOWD: You know, it`s -- it`s sad.

DICKERSON: Jon, let me ask you a question about governing versus campaigning.

MEACHAM: Right.

DICKERSON: So in -- in campaigning, you want candidates to be as straight as possible.

There is a case that Hillary Clinton tried to make in one of the Goldman Sachs` speeches that there should be...

MEACHAM: Right.

DICKERSON: -- a distance between the public position you have and the private in order to, when you`re trying to make deals -- you`ve written about a lot of presidents.

MEACHAM: Right.

DICKERSON: Is she right about that?

MEACHAM: Absolutely, she`s right. I mean the -- this is a -- this is not a new political insight, you know, we can go to to Machiavelli and go even -- even farther back.

Politics is the art of the possible. It`s about personal manipulation, in many ways. Thomas Jefferson would try to tell the person he was talking to, signal the person he was talking to that he agreed with them and he was going to take the best of what they said and try to put it with this other idea that wasn`t so great from the other guy and maybe we can get there.

And so, you know, we -- we live in a nation that is better off because Lyndon Johnson could do that, because Ronald Reagan could do that, to some extent.

So there`s always a public and a private face.

With the -- the problem right now is with 23 days to go, you have a woman who -- for whom, if this election were entirely a referendum on Trump, it would be over.

But as Bob says, it is also a referendum on her. And that`s why it`s so close.

DICKERSON: And, David, your thoughts about these emails, having covered Washington for a while?

IGNATIUS: Well, the emails are interesting. I -- I have to be honest, I find political embarrassment in them. I find characteristics of her closed, tight, scripted political personality, which is familiar to us.

I -- I haven`t found yet anything I`d call scandal. And on the question, is she a fundamentally dishonest person, she certainly is a -- is a closed person. But we`re looking at world class -- seeming world class dishonesty by the Republican candidate, Donald Trump.

So I just -- I`d -- I`d -- I`d make that -- make that distinction.

The final point, we don`t know what else is going to come out...

DICKERSON: Right. Right.

(CROSSTALK)

IGNATIUS: -- from these emails...

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Yes.

IGNATIUS: -- and -- and leaked things in the last month.

DICKERSON: Twenty seconds, Bob.

WOODWARD: I mean, that`s exactly right. We don`t know. And if these people, WikiLeaks or whoever is behind it, can hack John Podesta, my god, getting to Hillary Clinton`s emails, as the FBI now has told us -- there are 14,900 that were not turned over that have -- have gone to the State Department.

So, you know, keep your seat belts on.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Right.

DICKERSON: Yes, 23 more days and more disclosures.

Thanks to all of you.

When we come back, we`ll go in-depth with our Battleground Tracker.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: More from our Battleground Tracker and CBS News elections director, Anthony Salvanto.

In addition to the 6 point lead Hillary Clinton has now opened up in the 13 battleground states, our Tracker has her up 6 points in the state of Nevada and in Utah, Donald Trump is ahead with 37 percent of the support, third party and other candidates total 32 percent and Hillary Clinton has 20 percent support -- Anthony, let`s talk about the Trump tapes first...

ANTHONY SALVANTO, CBS NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Yes.

DICKERSON: -- and the effect those have had on her polling.

SALVANTO: Yes, we`re now on track for what may be one of the biggest gender gaps we have ever seen. And that is the difference between how women vote and how men vote. This swing toward Hillary Clinton overall is driven almost entirely by the women`s vote.

But what`s really notable is you go inside, and number one, you see a drop among Donald Trump`s support with Republican women. So he`s now lost ground among the very people that he needed at this point to start winning. And you start to see a little bit of a closing off in that nine and 10 of the women who find the tapes offensive now say they won`t consider him.

So that puts a bit of a barrier there going forward.

DICKERSON: And that was a group he needed.

Is that what`s behind -- that`s clearly what`s behind some of the defections from him, from other Republicans.

What do rank and file Republicans feel about those Republicans who -- who`ve bolted from Donald Trump?

SALVANTO: They think they`re motivated by politics and not by principal. And, you know, this is a larger them that we`ve seen throughout this year where the rank and file Republicans who elected Donald Trump to this -- to this nomination don`t care much what the party leadership thinks. In fact, even in this survey, they say that they think Donald Trump looks out for people like them more than they think the Republican Party represents them.

DICKERSON: Right. And that`s the point Tammy was making earlier.

You spent some time in Utah this week.

Why?

SALVANTO: Because Donald Trump is underperforming what a Republican typically does in reliably Republican Utah. And one of the big reasons out there is that conservative voters do not like him personally, people of the Mormon faith in particular think that, you know, he, as a person, they give him much lower ratings than Republicans and conservatives do across all the battleground states.

DICKERSON: Quickly, 20 seconds left, Republicans -- you`ve talked about women who may be closed off to Donald Trump.

What other -- is he having trouble inside of his party in other ways?

SALVANTO: He is down with Republicans overall. It`s those Republican women, it`s those Republican moderates that -- that he is not -- he is not capturing. And what makes that hard is that this is a point where you really needed to be -- any Republican needed to be closing ranks and growing from there.

Nine in 10 feel like he`s not even trying to win their vote, because they like him on the economy and they like him on defense, but that`s not what they say they`re hearing.

DICKERSON: All right, Anthony Salvanto, there`s so much, as always.

And we`ll be back in a moment.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: Today, and until next week, for FACE THE NATION, I`m John Dickerson.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

John Dickerson, Anna Werner

9623 speakers\_end

JOHN DICKERSON, CBS HOST: Today on FACE THE NATION: breaking news overnight, after a bomb injures 29 in New York City.

And the presidential race moves back into the too-close-to-call category.

An explosion rocks the Chelsea neighborhood in New York City Saturday night. Officials say none of the injuries are life-threatening. Just hours after the attack, Mayor Bill de Blasio spoke to reporters.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BILL DE BLASIO (D), MAYOR OF NEW YORK: There is no evidence at this point of a terror connection.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

DICKERSON: We will bring you the latest on the investigation.

The bombing had a sobering effect on a campaign where the candidates are nearly tied in the polls.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: A bomb went off in New York, and nobody knows exactly what`s going on, but, boy, we are living in a time. We better get very tough, folks.

HILLARY CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I will have more to say about it when we actually know the facts.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

DICKERSON: Recovering from pneumonia, Clinton has seen her lead over Donald Trump collapse. We will talk to Hillary Clinton`s running mate, Tim Kaine.

Plus, Donald Trump has dropped his five-year campaign to prove the president is not an American. We will hear from his campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, and the head of the Republican Party, Reince Priebus.

And, finally, a special visit with civil rights legend John Lewis at the new African-American Museum.

It`s all coming up on FACE THE NATION.

Good morning, and welcome to FACE THE NATION. I`m John Dickerson.

We begin with that explosion in New York City. It happened last night at around 8:30 at 23rd Street and 6th Avenue in Manhattan`s Chelsea neighborhood.

CBS News correspondent Anna Werner is there.

ANNA WERNER, CBS NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Well, streets are still closed off here in Chelsea, John, as authorities continue to try to determine who caused an explosion here and planted another device four blocks north.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

WERNER (voice-over): Surveillance video showed the white flash of the explosion as the blast at about 8:30 Saturday night sent people running.

WOMAN: I heard boom. I thought it might be fireworks, but it was so loud, and it just went through my whole body.

WERNER: Units from the police and FBI were quick to respond, cordoning off streets in the area and searching for evidence. About two hours later, police found a device in another location four blocks north. It was described as a pressure cooker. That street too was blocked off and police brought in a bomb disposal truck to remove the device.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

WERNER: Now, a law enforcement source this morning tells CBS News that terrorism has not, in fact, been ruled out, and they are also continuing to explore whether there are any potential links between the incidents that happen here and the pipe bomb explosion at a charity race event yesterday in New Jersey -- John.

DICKERSON: Anna Werner in New York, thanks, Anna.

We go now to New York Congressman Peter King, who sits on both the House intelligence and Homeland Security Committees.

Congressman, Governor Cuomo just said there are no links to international terrorism. Do you think that`s the case?

REP. PETER KING (R), NEW YORK: We don`t know. In fact, in many of these cases we don`t know until two, three or four days later whether or not there is a terrorist link, whether or not it`s connected overseas, whether or not it`s homegrown.

So, the fact that there is no evidence right now really doesn`t mean much. We had the Times Square bombing back in New York in 2011, I guess it was, and there was no -- it took several days before we realized that that was coming out of the Taliban and Pakistan.

The Boston Marathon bombing, we didn`t know for several days if that was terrorists. So, I think you have to assume from the start that terrorism is always a real possibility and go from there.

Whether it turns out to be or not, we don`t know, but I certainly would not even think of ruling out terrorism at this stage.

DICKERSON: What`s the best way to react for the public and law enforcement officials in incidents like this? We now are so connected that the minute something happens, there`s a kind of a rush to name it right away one thing or another. What`s the proper way to respond to these?

KING: To let the NYPD and the FBI handle it. They are the best. They are the best in the world at what they do. And also to realize that, as we go forward, that terrorism and these type of attacks, whether they`re coming from overseas or whether they`re homegrown or whether they`re just mall content, we are always vulnerable to these type of attacks.

And that`s why it`s so important that the police be allowed to do their job, that we have to have surveillance, we have to monitor, so we can tell in advance when these are going to happen or at least have a better grip on when they could be happening.

Sometimes, once things are over with, we sort of put it in the recesses of our mind. These threats are real. They`re going to continue. Whether or not this turns out to be overseas terrorism, whether it`s domestic terrorism or any terrorism at all, it`s a wakeup call, another one, as to how vulnerable we are.

And that`s why it`s so important for the police and FBI to be given the tools and be allowed to do what they have to do.

DICKERSON: And if New York can be hit, a city that`s been on top of this issue obviously since 9/11, what more can be done? Isn`t it just these kinds of things are going to happen, they`re part of the new normal?

KING: I don`t think we can accept it as being part of the new normal.

So, go to the larger issue. To me, it`s why the NSA is important. It`s why surveillance of communities where these threats could coming from is important, why we can`t allow overconcern about civil liberties to get in the way of solid law enforcement.

Let`s not let political correctness stop the police and the FBI from doing the investigations that they have to do. I have used the example many time, when you`re going after the mafia, you go to the Italian community, Irish communities when you are looking for the Westies.

And right now, if the threat is from Islamist terrorism, we go to Muslim communities.

DICKERSON: All right.

KING: You don`t look for the Ku Klux Klan in Harlem.

DICKERSON: All right, Congressman Pete King, thanks so much for being with us. We appreciate it.

KING: Thank you.

DICKERSON: Turning now to campaign 2016, our CBS News Battleground Tracker shows this morning that in the 13 states we consider to be the tightest, the candidates are now tied 42 percent to 42 percent, which is consistent with the latest national surveys.

So, what can Hillary Clinton do to regain her lost momentum?

We now go to Richmond and to her running mate, Senator Tim Kaine.

Senator, I want to start with the explosion in New York overnight. In moments like this, we look to the presidential candidates for some kind of response, but what can a president do if a lone wolf is going to put some kind of explosive device in a dumpster? Isn`t that first responders, and there`s really not a presidential question there, is there?

SEN. TIM KAINE (D-VA), VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Well, John, look, you have to understand that law enforcement plays a critical role, first- responders, too.

Hillary understands this. She was a senator from New York after the attack on 9/11 and worked to make sure first-responders got health care benefits. But the other thing is, we always have to watch about these lone wolf attacks.

We`re in a battle right now to defeat ISIS and to defeat al Qaeda. And in the battle against ISIS, their space on the battlefield is shrinking. Our military and the coalition is working to shrink their space, but, sadly, they are trying then to strike out in other places, whether it`s cities in Europe or Africa or in the United States.

The way you stop those attacks -- we don`t know the motive behind these attacks are yet, but we`re digging into it. But the way you stop lone wolf attacks is through smart sharing of intelligence. You have to have strong alliances, for example, with NATO allies, and share intelligence about people, people who might be traveling from one country to the next.

And Hillary Clinton, as somebody who has been our nation`s chief diplomat, understands the power of these alliances and would never do something like tear up NATO or get rid of the alliances in the way that Donald Trump proposes.

The last thing I will say is, obviously, this was a horrible explosion in New York. The size of it was massive, and, at least, thank goodness -- we`re thinking about those who are injured. At least, thank goodness, there are no fatalities reported. And that`s something that, at least as of now, we can be thankful for.

DICKERSON: Back to on this question of national security and commander in chief, Secretary Robert Gates wrote a piece in "The Wall Street Journal" critical of both candidates, but about Hillary Clinton, he said: "Mrs. Clinton has time before the election to address forthrightly her trustworthiness," which he put at the center of her ability to be commander in chief.

How does she fix the trustworthiness problem?

KAINE: You know, you`re right. Secretary Gates wrote that editorial. He said: I need to see more from Hillary Clinton, but I have seen enough from Donald Trump. He`s not qualified to be president.

Let me just jump right to your question, John, about trustworthiness. I have a boy who is a Marine infantry officer. He`s one of the two million young men and women who serve in the United States military. He`s deployed now for the second time.

I would trust Nat -- I would trust Hillary Clinton with Nat`s life, with my son`s life. And the reason I would is because she`s had that searing experience of being at the World Trade Center as they were searching for survivors, because she`s been our secretary of state, because she was part of a national security team that revived the hunt and wiped Osama bin Laden off the face of the earth.

I would trust her with my son`s life, whereas, on the other side, with Donald Trump, here`s a guy who praises dictators like Vladimir Putin. Here`s a guy who thinks a solution to global security is for more nations to get nuclear weapons.

But, most painfully to me and other military families, here is a guy who says the American military is a disaster, who makes fun of John McCain because he was a prisoner of war and says that means he`s not a hero, and who went after the Virginia family, the Khan family, who live in Charlottesville, and went after them mercilessly after they very painfully described how it was to lose their son serving in the military who was killed trying to protect his fellow service members.

Donald Trump, as commander in chief, scares me to death.

DICKERSON: So, Senator, if Donald Trump is democratically elected and your son serving as a Marine, you wouldn`t trust his life under that commander in chief?

KAINE: I wouldn`t.

(CROSSTALK)

DICKERSON: Would you tell him to get out of the military, Senator?

KAINE: My son is a very independent guy, and he`s going to make his own determination. And my other two children are equally independent

But Donald Trump has demonstrated, by his trashing the military, by his belief that we need more nukes, but especially by his praise of dictators, even encouraging the Russians to commit cyber-espionage against the United States, he`s demonstrated that he just -- he shouldn`t be within 10 time zones of being commander in chief.

DICKERSON: Let me ask you, on this question of trustworthiness, oftentimes, presidents bring in a vice president who helps them with their weak spots. George W. Bush did that with Dick Cheney. Barack Obama did that with Joe Biden, Senator Joe Biden, the idea that they didn`t have enough experience, so they brought in an experienced hand.

A lot of Hillary Clinton`s supporters and friends say her blind spot is this question of transparency and trust. Do you see your job as helping out on that? You`re the new guy in the team. Do you see that as a part of your role?

KAINE: John, I will tell you why Hillary asked me to be on the ticket. She was pretty plain about it.

She said that the test of a Clinton administration is not going to be a bill signing or a passage of something. It`s going to be whether a worker can get more skills, an employer can hire more people, a classroom is a better learning environment for a kid or for a teacher.

It`s, fundamentally,she wants a governing partner for our positive agenda. And, John, we have laid out a positive agenda. And I just want to show it to you. We have put out a book called "Stronger Together" that reflects our vision for this country in this race.

Donald Trump wrote a book when he decided to run for president, and the title of his book is, "Crippled America."

This is the case we`re making over the next 50-plus days, that this is fundamentally an election about a choice of vision. If you see our country as stronger together, we`re the ticket. And we have got the policies to carry that forward.

But if you look at our country and you see it as a crippled America, then that`s what Donald Trump believes. But I tell you, I don`t see that in the optimistic, can-do, upbeat spirit of the American people, public that I meet on the trail.

DICKERSON: All right, Senator Kaine, we`re out of time. Thanks so much for being with us.

KAINE: Yes. Thanks, John.

DICKERSON: Turning now to the Republican side, Donald Trump`s campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway, joins us now from Trump Tower in New York.

Good morning, Kellyanne.

I want to start with a piece that Defense Secretary Robert Gates, former defense secretary, wrote in "The Wall Street Journal." He was critical of both candidates, but particularly critical of Mr. Trump.

And I want to play Mr. Trump`s reaction to it last night and get your reaction.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: We had a clown today, an absolute clown, Robert Gates. He`s supposed to be an expert. He`s been there forever.

So, he goes out and he says negative things about me. I never met him. I never talked to him. Believe me, I am so much better at what he`s doing than he is.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

DICKERSON: So, Robert Gates served eight presidents, most of them Republicans, one Democrat.

A clown?

KELLYANNE CONWAY, TRUMP CAMPAIGN MANAGER: So, Mr. Gates, Secretary Gates, really should have I think in his book been a little bit more forceful about the fact that radical Islam has ideological moorings.

He acts like terrorism is something like the weather, it just happens. And we, as Americans, know that`s not true. And I think that`s part of why Mr. Trump is doing very well on the issue of who would vanquish radical Islamic terrorism. And he`s actually willing to call the enemy what it is, John.

Hillary Clinton, in her convention speech, referred to radical Islamic terrorists as our -- quote -- "determined enemies."

So, there`s a great deal of frustration by many Americans that we just don`t have serious leaders all of the time addressing terrorism for what it is.

DICKERSON: But one of the critiques that Secretary Gates, who has seen and worked with a few presidents made, was that Donald Trump is thin-skinned, he doesn`t have the temperament for the office.

Wasn`t he in, in response to Mr. Gates, proving Mr. Gates` point?

CONWAY: No, not at all.

He was defending himself, and Mr. Trump has the right to do that. He`s attacked by people who have never met him, who haven`t given a thoughtful look to his plans, which, of course, are out there for everyone to see. He`s on the stump every single day delivering policy speeches, addressing crowds, rallies.

I mean, Bernie Sanders had an event yesterday in Ohio for Hillary Clinton. There were 150 people there. That`s like a second wedding where I come from. This is a big movement for Hillary Clinton.

And he has a -- Mr. Trump has a right to defend himself from people who I don`t think are looking at the substance of his plans. They`re just judging someone they have never met.

DICKERSON: I would like to move on to a position that Mr. Trump held for five years, that Barack Obama was not born in the United States. He changed that position on Friday. Why?

CONWAY: Well, on Friday, he made very clear three things, number one, that it was Mark Penn, Hillary Clinton`s chief strategist and pollster, who put President Obama`s citizenship in question when he wrote a famous memo in March of 2007 questioning his -- quote -- "American roots," saying, at a time of war, how could we elect someone like this? It was pretty radical stuff.

And, then, of course, even Patti Solis Doyle, who was Hillary Clinton`s campaign manager in 2008, John, until she was fired by Hillary Clinton, admitted on Friday to Wolf Blitzer that she said, yes, these are her words. There was a volunteer in Iowa who was pushing this.

And so this started with Hillary Clinton`s campaign, number one. Number two, it was Donald Trump who put the issue to rest when he got President Obama to release his birth certificate years later.

And, number three, he said that President Obama was born in this country, period, and let`s move on to creating jobs, defeating radical Islam, rebuilding our inner cities. And that`s what he said.

DICKERSON: The reason I want to stick on this a little bit is he promoted this for five years. So, this isn`t just some passing notion. This was a considerable amount of energy and time and money that he spent promoting this idea.

The Clinton -- Mark Penn didn`t say anything about his citizenship. Also, if you look at the Clinton campaign, they fired the one staffer who sent an e-mail about this immediately.

Donald Trump spent five years, his own money, called press conferences to promote this idea.

So, I go back to my original question. Why did he change his mind, and when did he do it?

CONWAY: Well, Donald Trump was not running for president against -- in a bruising, vicious primary in 2008 against Hillary -- against Barack Obama.

Hillary Clinton was. And you know that the former D.C. bureau chief of McClatchy newspaper, a respected journalist, just on Friday, John, said that he was approached, he had a meeting with Sid Blumenthal, what is a very close confidant of both Clintons and then was on the payroll of the Clinton Foundationthereafter, he had a meeting with him where Sid Blumenthal allegedly told him that President Obama was not born in this country and to go check it out.

So, the idea that Clinton -- that people around Hillary Clinton were not responsible for this, Donald Trump in 2007 and 2008, while the Clintons folks were pushing this theory, he was a successful businessman. He was building things.

(CROSSTALK)

DICKERSON: But, Kellyanne, he`s asked us to go back and look at things that he said about foreign policy back in 2003, to draw conclusions about his judgment.

So, things he said in the private sector, something he spent five years promoting, you said he got the birth certificate released and that put an end to it. But it didn`t put an end to it for him. For years after the birth certificate was released, he continued to question it, continued to question whether Barack Obama was born in the United States and whether the birth certificate was a fraud.

So, when the campaign puts out a statement and says he ended in 2011, and you have asserted that today, that`s just not the truth, is it?

CONWAY: No, I didn`t say that.

What I`m saying is, is that it was President Obama released his birth certificate in 2011. Nobody accuses Hillary Clinton with Mariano Rivera. She`s not a good closer. And she wasn`t on this issue at all.

Associates of Hillary Clinton started pushing the issue because Barack Obama came out of nowhere to them. They never expected him to rise in the polls, let alone beat her in her Democratic primary, where a vast majority of voters, by the way, were female and rejected her in that year, just like they didn`t see Bernie Sanders coming and just like they didn`t see our comeback of the Trump campaign coming.

DICKERSON: Let me ask you, Kellyanne...

CONWAY: She`s not known to be a closer. She`s not known to be good at recapturing momentum. And that proved it.

DICKERSON: So, I understand you wanted to talk about Hillary Clinton, and this is an election about a choice. That`s important.

But it`s also about whether people can trust the candidate who may become president one day and who may send people to die in a war. And so, just on this question of trust, Donald Trump advocated something for five years that was a lie. Why did he do that?

CONWAY: Well, you`re going to have to ask him.

But I -- again, I think that this is a sideshow now that the media seem obsessed with this John, respectfully. And, again, he put everything out on the table on Friday. Those are his words. He does things on his term, on his timeline, and he very crisply got to the microphone after honoring 14 gold medal recipients and also after -- after -- after showing all these veterans that supported us, our campaign. We were very proud to stand with them in Washington, D.C.

And he said the three things that you and I just repeated. But, again, you know what this campaign also did this week that nobody seems to want to talk about?

DICKERSON: All right.

CONWAY: We tightened the polls. We have a child care plan, economic plan. He is talking -- he was standing yesterday with parents of victims of illegal **alien**crimes who have murdered their children.

DICKERSON: Right.

CONWAY: You know, there are so many things going on in our campaign, and that`s his entire point. He`s moved on to the things that matter to America.

DICKERSON: I understand, but he did spend five years on it, so it would be -- it would be something -- we would be remiss if we didn`t pay some attention to something that he spent so many years advocating and promoting.

Kellyanne Conway, thank you so much for being with us.

And we will be back in one minute.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: And we`re back with the chairman of the RNC, Reince Priebus.

Mr. Chairman, on Friday, Donald Trump said he no longer believes that Barack Obama was born somewhere other than the United States. For five years, though, he spent a lot of time on this issue, and he now says that he`s the one who was out there just trying to put this rumor to rest.

Do you really believe that`s what he was doing for five years?

REINCE PRIEBUS, CHAIRMAN, REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE: Well, I think that it was something that got started in the 2008 presidential campaign.

Now, whose fault it was, you know, Hillary Clinton herself, her supporters, her interns, her staffers, clearly, it was something that was circulating in 2008. He -- I`m not -- so, I`m agreeing with you that he took it further.

DICKERSON: Yes.

PRIEBUS: He took it further.

DICKERSON: Right.

PRIEBUS: And he brought it into the public debate even more so than what was brought in, in 2008.

However, the point is, people are asking him about it. People weren`t asking him about it for a long time. And he came out and said, listen, I was involved in trying to figure this out as well, and I have determined that the president was born in Hawaii, just like I have said for years

So, this is not like, for me, a mystery.

DICKERSON: So, there is also no evidence that Hillary Clinton herself had anything to do with this. There are some rumors that people on her staff and there was one person was caught spreading rumors about Barack Obama...

(CROSSTALK)

DICKERSON: ... fired.

PRIEBUS: And people get convicted every single day with circumstantial evidence that is enough to tip the scale.

And by the preponderance of the evidence before us, Hillary Clinton or her campaign were definitely involved in this issue. So, we can`t keep saying it`s not true. That`s ridiculous.

DICKERSON: But...

PRIEBUS: I know you didn`t, but there`s enough media people out there claiming that that`s not true, as if it`s some fiction. It`s not fiction. It`s the truth.

DICKERSON: Sure.

But when you think about -- it may be contributory, but Donald Trump spent the bulk of his time...

(CROSSTALK)

PRIEBUS: But he`s not denying it.

DICKERSON: No, I understand that. But I guess my point is this.

PRIEBUS: But she is denying it, and that`s ridiculous.

DICKERSON: My point -- well, her former campaign manager said...

(CROSSTALK)

PRIEBUS: All right, so everyone around her is involved, but not her, so, therefore, she`s innocent.

DICKERSON: Well, everyone around her is a little more than the evidence would support.

(CROSSTALK)

PRIEBUS: Her campaign deputy manager was apologizing on CNN three days ago for it.

DICKERSON: But she said she fired the one person who brought it up immediately. There`s a difference between firing one person immediately and then...

(CROSSTALK)

PRIEBUS: What about Sid Blumenthal? Was he involved or not?

DICKERSON: Well, let`s assume that he was.

PRIEBUS: OK.

DICKERSON: So, you have a person spreading rumors. And then you have someone making a five-year crusade, holding press conferences and spending money.

(CROSSTALK)

DICKERSON: Here`s my question to you, which is not to figure out the details anymore, but to ask you this question. Donald Trump said Republicans love this idea in 2011 when he talked about it and congratulated himself for reinvigorating the investigation of it.

The question is, did the nominee of the Republican Party use this issue as a political issue to rile up Republicans? And is this the kind of thing that gets Republicans excited, the question of whether the president was born in America? That was his assertion.

PRIEBUS: I don`t think...

(CROSSTALK)

PRIEBUS: ... my opinion.

DICKERSON: Yes.

PRIEBUS: I don`t think Donald Trump was thinking about 2016 in 2011.

It was an issue that he was interested in. It was an issue that I believe and I think the preponderance of the evidence shows Hillary Clinton started it. And after getting this issue resolved, he proclaimed on Friday that he believes that the president was born in America, just like I have as chairman of the Republican Party. And I never believed that he wasn`t born in the United States of America.

DICKERSON: We will have to hold it right there. We will take a commercial break.

We will be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: We have got a lot more FACE THE NATION coming up. Don`t go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: Some of our CBS stations are leaving us now, but for most of you, we will be right back with a lot more politics and our interview with civil rights legend John Lewis.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: Welcome back the FACE THE NATION. I`m John Dickerson.

We continue with the chairman of the Republican Party, Reince Priebus. So we`ll leave the previous issue because -- you once said that the electoral -- the way the Electoral College works, Democrats just have to be good, Republicans need to be nearly perfect. Is Donald Trump running a nearly perfect campaign?

PRIEBUS: Well, let me tell you something. I know this is -- it`s going to be a fascinating year for everybody. And we all know that. But I have been -- and I think people need to get outside this beltway and get on the road. If they were to see what I would see, I see one of the greatest ground game movements, on the ground, meaning people coming to events, 20,000 in middle Pennsylvania, 22,000 in Seattle. This is probably one of the biggest movements as far as people across this country in modern history. And so while everyone loves to analyze Donald Trump all day long, 24/7 on cable, I think people have to look at what the facts are. And we`re tied today, as we sit here, 51 days from the election. And we have a candidate that is capturing the electorate, America. It might not be capturing the pundits, but he`s capturing America.

DICKERSON: Is he capturing reluctant Republicans, some of which are -- some of whom are public officials in the Republican Party who are either in the never Trump or who are in the barely Trump category, which --

PRIEBUS: Well, I mean, some of the people who ran for president, I mean -- but what you have to look at is, where are we at with the voters? And where we`re at with the voters is, in one of the last polls that I just saw, nearly 90 percent of the Republicans. I think Mitt was about 91, 92. We need to do a couple more percentage points better. And we`re doing that as we move forward.

But, look, people who agreed to support the nominee, that took part in our process, they used tools from the RNC. They agreed to support the nominee. They took part in our process. We`re a private party. We`re not a public entity.

DICKERSON: Uh-huh.

PRIEBUS: Those people need to get on board. And if they`re thinking they`re going to run again someday, you know, I think that we`re going to evaluate the process of the nomination process, and I don`t think it`s going to be that easy for them.

DICKERSON: It -- would the party itself penalized somebody who does not make good on the pledge that they made to support the party`s nominee?

PRIEBUS: I think these are things that our party`s going to look at in the process. And I think that people who gave us their word, used information from the RNC, should be on board. I mean why take part in the process --

DICKERSON: John Kasich?

PRIEBUS: Sure.

DICKERSON: Governor John Kasich. So if he wants to run again, it seems like he might want to, he might be out of luck as far as the RNC goes?

PRIEBUS: Well, I -- look, people are -- in our party are talking about what we`re going to do about this. I mean there`s a ballot access issue in South Carolina. In order to be on the ballot in South Carolina, you actually have to pledge your support to the nominee, no matter who that person is? So what`s the penalty for that? It`s not a threat. It`s just a question that we have a process in place. And if a private entity puts forward a process and has agreement with the participants in that process, and those participants don`t follow through with the promises that they made in that process, what -- what should a private party do about that if those same people come around in four or eight years?

DICKERSON: Sounds like a brushback pitch, but let me ask you one last question. Donald Trump said at one point the debates were rigged because of the nights they were on. He`s claimed the moderators are rigged. You have been a part of this process. Has the process been fair? Do you -- does it feel fair to you at this point?

PRIEBUS: Well, I -- there are two parts to that. I mean as far as our party is concerned, I think I`ve been straight up and fair the whole way through. And I -- I think people have evaluated what we`ve done and I think people understand that I have -- I think I played it straight down the middle from the beginning to the end. I do think that the -- I do think the media, especially in the cable 24/7 world, is totally obsessed with negative six- minute segments on Donald Trump no matter what it is. And I think that part of it is very unfair.

DICKERSON: But the debate part, so far, as far as this --

PRIEBUS: Oh --

DICKERSON: The nights it`s happening, who the moderators are, all that, it`s all -- seems fair to you or --

PRIEBUS: Look, I think -- I think it`s square. And I think people are ready to move forward and move on with this. And I think, you know, that first debate is going to be probably one of the biggest events in the history of presidential politics.

DICKERSON: All right. Mr. Chairman, thanks so much for being with us.

PRIEBUS: You bet.

DICKERSON: And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: And we`re back with our political panel. Ruth Marcus is the deputy editorial page editor and columnist at "The Washington Post," Reihan Salam is the executive editor with "The National Review," Mark Leibovich is the chief national correspondent for "The New York Time`s Magazine," and a CBS Newscontributor.

Ruth, I want to start with you. The response to this explosion in New York overnight, Donald Trump got off the plane immediately, said, a bomb went off. Turns out he was right. Hillary Clinton said, we`ve got to wait for the details. Is that a frame through which we should look at the two candidates?

RUTH MARCUS, "WASHINGTON POST": I -- I think it`s actually pretty telling. He turned out to be right, but might not have. I think that -- look, I`m a facts girl, so I think the response, I`d like to wait for the facts until I comment, is always a good idea. I think both of them could have -- could have behooved them to express some concern for the victims, which seems to be something that`s forgotten in all of this.

DICKERSON: Yes.

Reihan, I want to ask you about this op-ed by Secretary Robert Gates, attacked both candidates -- not attacked, sorry, criticized both candidates for their weaknesses. Hillary Clinton not trustworthy enough, Donald Trump said he was thin skinned, didn`t have the temperament for the job. Does this matter? Does it -- does he raise important questions about this? And was Donald Trump`s -- calling him a clown, does that matter or is that just what we`re used to from Donald Trump?

REIHAN SALAM, "NATIONAL REVIEW": My sense is that Donald Trump`s style, the braggadocio and what have you is basically priced in for voters. What I saw happen this week was something very different and very interesting. If you look at the surveys, it looks as though Hillary Clinton`s support with the Obama coalition is softening. If you look at younger voters, millennial voters, it`s softening pretty drastically. Even if you look at, for example, younger black men, it seems that there`s some weakness here.

Whereas, if you look at Donald Trump, there`s certainly what, you know, folks in many media outlets talk about, they talk about the birther controversy, among other things, which I`m sure we`ll talk more about now. But what has he been doing? He has proposed a new social program for working mothers. He went on "The Dr. Oz Show," which, by the way, is a show that`s watched by, you know, many of the voters he`s seeking to reach, and he praised Medicaid and suggested that we ought to expand the Medicaid program further. So when you think about, you know, trying to get through one channel, the people who read "The Wall Street Journal" editorial page let`s say, and then trying the reach another channel, think about the married white women in a state like Pennsylvania, the people that he hasn`t been able to reach, the people who have been reluctant to join his campaign. It`s not obvious to me that he hasn`t done a decent job of doing an end run around certain kinds of media criticism and reaching those people.

DICKERSON: Yes, and the polls have tightened a little and , Mark, then -- if we`re picking up on Reihan`s point about those kinds of voters, the reintroduction of the idea that -- that for five years Donald Trump was the advocate for the idea that Barack Obama was not born in the United States, does that matter to those kinds of voters? Is that why he finally came out and said, yes, he was born here?

MARK LEIBOVICH, "NEW YORK TIME`S MAGAZINE": I -- I think it does matter to those kinds of voters. I mean I think what we`re -- I think the lead that Hillary Clinton opened up in August was a lot of sort of softening Republicans. I mean Reihan mentioned softening of the Obama coalition. I mean I think, you know, a lot of these were sort of squishy Republicans who were -- would listen to someone like Susan Collins, who said that she wouldn`t vote for Donald Trump.

You know, there`s like this -- this divide between Republicans who actually know who Robert Gates is, and those who don`t. I mean, you know, he`s obviously a very well-respected figure in the Republican Party, or at least the establishment of the Republican Party. Yes, I was actually somewhat surprised by how critical he was of Hillary Clinton, who he apparently was an ally -- or I thought had been an ally of pretty closely during the Obama years when -- when they both served together.

I -- I do think that the kind of language he used, he said beyond repair, I think was -- were the exact words, is the kind of damning language that does sort of put the fear of, you know, actually pulling the level for him into a lot of the suburban Republicans in Philadelphia or Cleveland would have you.

DICKERSON: One thing that`s been interesting, Ruth, in the Clinton conversations you have with her staffers is for the last several weeks they`ve said, you know, we realize we have to be out there talking about solutions. And that`s been interrupted by her comments about half of the Trump supporters being in the basket of deplorables, her health issues. Now other things are getting in the way. What does that tell you, though, that this late in the campaign they`re feeling like, we still have to make the case for Hillary Clinton.

MARCUS: And -- and she still feels like she has to make the case. That`s part of what she`s thinking about in the debates. It has been impossible -- it`s actually impossible even for Donald Trump`s policy, now that it`s coming, to break through Donald Trump. And so it`s -- she`s had a hard time either talking about individual policies in this campaign, but even larger, talking about the larger vision that she has for the country and for getting people to like her/trust her. This is a big challenge in the debate in addition to kind of simultaneously trying to fact check Donald Trump.

DICKERSON: I want -- I want to get back to the debate -- the debate in a minute and the question of one can fix one`s liabilities in a debate. But, Reihan, on this question of Donald Trump`s view on the president`s birth, he has asked us and his campaign has asked us to look back at his business career for an idea of how he`d be president, look at his judgement on foreign policy on the various things he may or may not have said. They now want this not to be a conversation, the question of the president`s birth, but you can`t just say it`s over.

SALAM: Oh, I think it`s pretty clear that Donald Trump talked about this, raised questions about this for many years. But again, as I suggested earlier, the thing is that this may well be very relevant and motivating for some voters. It is not clearly to me that those voters for whom this is a pressing and important issue are voters that Donald Trump was ever going to be able to win regardless.

Now, let`s look at a state like Florida, and Mark Leibovich`s newspaper, "The New York Times," you have a new report on survey findings in Florida. What you see is that, you know, back in 2008, Hillary Clinton was well to the right of Barack Obama on some **immigration** issues. Now she is well to his left in terms of how she talks about them, how she talks about deportation relief and much else. Yet, if you look at Hispanic voters, Barack Obama, the last time around, won 60 percent of those voters. Hillary Clinton is well behind Barack Obama`s mark among Hispanic voters.

Now, they`re not going to Donald Trump, but it seems like a lot of them are demotivated.

DICKERSON: Yes.

SALAM: And, you know, this is a pattern you see not just in Florida but many other states besides. And so a state like Florida, that many people assumed because of Hillary Clinton`s big push on **immigration** and amnesty and other issues, would be in the bag for her, she is struggling there. So, you know, is she struggling with the kind of voters for whom talk of the birther controversy is -- is really meaningful, yes. And, actually, it may well make sense that by magnifying this, by talking about this, that could help motivate some of those voters. But, you know, again, is that going to get her over the bar? We`ll see.

MARCUS: I`m just going to disagree with Reihan on the question of whether this is an issue that could affect voters who would otherwise be for Trump. I think there`s two -- first of all, it is astonishing that we are debating this, this late in the game. It`s something that Donald Trump, if he didn`t put it away in 2011, should have put away way earlier this cycle. And the notion that Kellyanne Conway, you asked her about whether -- why Donald Trump was lying about the president`s birth and suggesting that he wasn`t born in America for the last five years, she said, you`ll have to ask him. That means, case is not closed and definite -- and so I think the voters who can be effected by this are voters who might -- they might not be voters who would go for Trump, but they`re voters who might have thought about staying home in the polls or they`re voters who might have been tempted --

SALAM: By the way that`s -- I agree with Ruth.

MARCUS: Tempted -- tempted by a Gary Johnson or a Jill Stein and now get enraged and scared about the notion of Trump being president.

SALAM: That`s -- that`s pretty much my view as well.

DICKERSON: I hear -- Marc, I hear two things.

MARCUS: (INAUDIBLE).

DICKERSON: I hear on the right people saying, this is the press obsessed --

LEIBOVICH: (INAUDIBLE) Democrat.

DICKERSON: With this question of Obama`s birth to not cover policy that Trump`s actually talking about. On the left I hear, don`t fall for Donald Trump talking about birther things. Pay attention to the foundation and other things. What`s the right way to look at this?

LEIBOVICH: Well, I would say, look, the -- the notion that -- that Donald Trump settled this debate for like however many years and we`re still -- when was this ever a debate? I mean it was a debate on the fringes in certain sectors. Donald Trump, I mean for -- has been well documented, you know, spent five years doing it. Whether voters respond to it or not, it`s appalling. It`s appalling on its face to actually watch this argument play out. It`s edifying to no one. I mean the facts are very, very clear. And, you know, just speaking as one human being, you know, maybe I`m in the media so I`m suspect, I find it appalling. I think many people do. You know, whether it plays out electorally or not, I mean I think it`s clear that we -- we make clear, you know, what we`re talking about here.

DICKERSON: Ruth, let`s move to the debates.

Everybody`s saying, Reince Priebus said, the most -- the biggest political event in the world. Is that good, by the way, just to have that much focus on a single thing?

MARCUS: I -- it is what it is. And I think it`s, look, to the extent that, now, Donald Trump is helping to generate the biggest ratings ever, ever, the more voters pay attention, the more voters are engaged, even if they haven`t been engaged beforehand, the better off we are. And it`s actually why it`s really important that we have three debates, not one debate, so -- so that -- that people aren`t affected by one single thing. You can -- you can clean up. You can go back to issues.

DICKERSON: Reihan, what should we be looking for in the debate?

SALAM: Well, one thing I`ll just throw out there is that back in 2012 Bill Clinton, at the Democratic National Convention, felt like it was really important that Republicans wanted to cut the Medicaid program. The fact that Donald Trump now is saying he wants to expand it is just completely not an issue, and that`s pretty amazing. And that tells you something about the debate. In the first debate between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, Mitt Romney was able to do an end run about a lot of the media conversation about his campaign and connect directly with voters and present a very different face. Now, I`m not sure if Donald Trump is capable of doing that, but imagine if he does. Imagine if he shows the way -- the many ways that he appears to be not like other Republicans, for better or for worse, by the way. You know, that`s something where he`s going to have a direct channel to an audience that`s been hearing all kinds of messages about him. So that will be interesting to watch.

LEIBOVICH: Yes, I don`t have a -- I just have a sense, and I could be wrong because I`m not in the room, but I don`t think Donald Trump is just sort of crashing on the details of his Medicaid policy just as he prepares for this debate. I mean I think what`s exhilarating to him is that this is a great show. He sees himself foremost as a showman. He thinks that he can handle the stage, handle the moment, and that will be (INAUDIBLE).

I mean the Clinton campaign has said over and over and over again is that, look, 100 million peoples could watch this. This is a moment to actually get very basic facts and very basic -- basically, you know, ads about Donald Trump`s history, my own credibility out there. And I think to some degree they see it as kind of an -- almost a writ large version of their convention condensed into a couple of hours.

DICKERSON: All right, Mark, we`re going to have to leave it there. It`s a little more than a week away till that first debate and thanks all of you for being here. We`ll be right back in a moment.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: Opening of the new Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture. We visited the museum with a man who spent 15 years working on its establishment, Georgia Congressman John Lewis.

Congressman, we`re sitting here at a lunch counter. What does that mean to you?

REP. JOHN LEWIS (D), GEORGIA: Sitting here, I tell you, means everything to me. My first non-violent protest was in 1960 in downtown Nashville sitting down at a lunch counter on a stool in the local Woolworth store. So this all takes me back.

I grew up sitting down. It -- I wouldn`t be the person that I am today if it hadn`t been for taking a seat.

DICKERSON: What does it mean to be here inside this building?

LEWIS: It -- it -- it just means everything. I -- to walk in here, to be here, to see this magnificent museum, it`s going to continue to take me back. Just walking through here, I almost cried. I don`t want you to make me cry.

DICKERSON: You also spoke at the other end of this mall on the March on Washington. Would you ever have imagined that there would be this kind of a monument?

LEWIS: I never thought, I never dreamed that one day there would be a monument, there would be a museum telling the story and the history of African Americans for the days of slavery to the present.

DICKERSON: What is that story you want people to understand when they come here?

LEWIS: This story is an American story. It tells of our history, our struggles, through segregation, racial discrimination, but much earlier, the whole system of slavery, the denial of basic constitutional right, the right to vote, the right to get an education, that people suffered, they struggled. People were beaten and arrested and jailed. People died. But they never give up. They never gave in. They never became bitter or hostile. They kept the faith. And they kept dreaming.

DICKERSON: When you spoke on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, you said, "wake up, America. We cannot stop, and we will not and cannot be patient." A real sense of urgency. Where are things now in terms of urgency in the fight for social justice?

LEWIS: Well, we have come a distance. We`ve made a lot of progress. When people tell me nothing has changed, I feel like saying, come and walk in my shoes. I will show you change. We`re one people. And we`re almost be involved in a struggle that we were involved in during the `50s and the `60s. White people and black people suffered together. They died together to bring about change, to bring down those signs that wait "white waiting, "colored waiting," "white men," colored men," "white women," "colored women." Those signs are gone and they will not return. The only places we will see those signs today will be in a book or in a museum, like this museum.

DICKERSON: Speaking of getting inside of John Lewis` shoes, there`s a picture of you here on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. What was happening in that picture?

LEWIS: Well, on March 7, 1965, a group of us, about 600 of us, wanted to walk from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, to dramatize to the nation and to the world that people of color wanted to register to vote. We were walking in an orderly, peaceful, non-violent fashion. We came to the highest point on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, crossing the Alabama River. Down below we saw a sea of blue, Alabama state troopers. And a man spoke up, the major, said, "this is an unlawful march. It will not be allowed to continue." And a young man from Dr. King`s organization walked over to the side and said, "major, give us a moment to kneel and pray." And the major said, "troopers, advance." I said, "major, may I have a word?" And he said, "there will be no word."

They came toward us, beating us with night stick, trampling us with horses, releasing the tear gas. I was hit in the head by a state trooper from a night stick. I had a concussion at the bridge. I thought i as going to die. I thought I saw death. Two weeks later, we walked from Selma to Montgomery, and President Johnson made one of the most moving speeches any American president had made in modern time on the whole question of voting rights and civil rights. And at the end of that speech he said, "and we shall overcome."

DICKERSON: You recently wrote a piece in "The Huffington Post" about that march from Selma to Montgomery. And you said there`s a way to talk about where we are today. Tell me a little bit about that.

LEWIS: The march 50 years ago changed America forever. There were hundreds and thousands of people coming from all across America, priests, rabbis, nuns, ministers, lawyers, doctors, teachers, white, all coming together. It was like a holy walk. And that -- there to the past (ph) the Voting Rights Act, we -- there`s still a need for people to use non-violent protests. We should never ever give up on the right to protest of what is right.

DICKERSON: You mentioned non-violence. Martin Luther King and "The Montgomery Story," that comic book that inspired you when you were growing up, in that comic book it talks about loving thy neighbor. It`s a strong part of the non-violent message. That even the people who are hitting you and beating you deserve your love. Where is that message now?

LEWIS: The message is still embedded in many of us. I think we have to teach all of our children, and those of us not so young, that the way of love is a better way. Just respect the dignity and the worth of every human being. We need to continue to get it out there. And if we get it right, I really believe, if we get it right in America, maybe it can serve as a model for the rest of the world?

DICKERSON: Is that message of loving thy neighbor, is it being lost a little bit?

LEWIS: I think there`s some forces in America trying the take us back to another period. But we must not let that happen.

DICKERSON: Do you see that in the presidential campaign this year?

LEWIS: Well, I see it very much so. That there are forces that want to divide us. And we must not be divided. We`ve come so far. We`ve made so much progress about working and building together. Too many of my friends, too many of my colleagues, young people that I knew, in `63 and `64, white and African-Americans died together and we must not let their deaths be in vain.

DICKERSON: Thank you, sir.

LEWIS: Thank you, sir.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

DICKERSON: And we`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: There will be more of our conversation with John Lewis on our website, facethenation.com.

That`s it for today. Thanks for watching. Until next week, for FACE THE NATION, I`m John Dickerson.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**

John Dickerson, Eric Fisher, Anthony Salvanto, Jamelle Bouie

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JOHN DICKERSON, CBS HOST: Today on FACE THE NATION: The candidates enter the final stretch of campaign 2016, and the East Coast prepares for another possible round of Hurricane Hermine.

Saturday, Donald Trump went to church, looking for minority votes and maybe some divine intervention to help his campaign against Hillary Clinton.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I am here today to listen to your message, and I hope my presence here will also help your voice to reach new audiences.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

DICKERSON: But after Trump`s surprise trip to Mexico and a speech on **immigration** further muddled his message, is the outreach strategy working?

We will find out with now Battleground Tracker poll numbers, plus analysis of where the race stands.

We will talk with New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, who heads Donald Trump`s presidential transition team, and we will check in with Arizona Republican Senator Jeff Flake to see if he`s any closer to supporting the Republican presidential nominee.

And as Hillary Clinton closes books on a big month of August fund-raising, we will talk about the fallout from new revelations out of her FBI interviews about the use of a private e-mail server while secretary of state.

Plus, former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales talks about his new book on the George W. Bush years and weighs in on campaign 2016.

It`s all ahead on this Labor Day weekend on FACE THE NATION.

Good morning, and welcome to FACE THE NATION. I`m John Dickerson.

We have got a lot to get to today, but we begin with Hermine, the storm that`s caused the heavy rains, high winds, power outages, dangerous surf and two fatalities as it moved across Florida, and now up the Eastern Seaboard.

Eric Fisher is chief meteorologist at our CBS affiliate WBZ in Boston -- Eric.

ERIC FISHER, WBZ METEOROLOGIST: Good morning, John.

Very tricky storm we have been tracking here over these last several days, and the latest trend, a little farther to the east. That`s what we saw overnight tonight. So, many along the coastline will see conditions deteriorate over time as we head into overnight tonight and Monday.

Our tropical storm warnings are still up from the Mid-Atlantic, up to coastal Connecticut, tropical storm watches in southeastern New England. And here`s the latest track, staying a little farther to the east. What that means is, a lot less rainfall, really no rain, except for right along the immediate coast late tonight and Monday getting some showers, but the heaviest rain stays offshore.

At the same time, it`s still a very strong storm, big wind field. It`s going to move very slowly. So, as we head through Sunday into Monday and into Tuesday, those strong winds churning up the surf. And so our main impacts are going to be still some coastal flooding, also a lot of beach erosion from the Mid-Atlantic up into New England, rain totals low, some even seeing the sun, but the beaches really taking a beating this Labor Day weekend -- John.

DICKERSON: All right, Eric Fisher, thanks so much.

Turning now to the other big story this weekend, campaign 2016.

Our CBS News Battleground Tracker today looks at North Carolina, where Hillary Clinton is up by four points over Donald Trump, 46 to 42 percent. In Pennsylvania, a state Donald Trump promises he will win, Clinton enjoys a comfortable lead, with 45 percent to 37 percent for Trump.

We have added Arizona and Georgia to our original 11 battleground states. So, now, if we look at the race in the 13 most potentially competitive states, Hillary Clinton is up by two points over Donald Trump, 42-40 percent.

The remaining voters are either undecided or supporting a third-party candidate.

Joining us now from his home in Mendham, New Jersey, is Governor Chris Christie.

Governor, before we get back to politics, quickly on Hurricane Hermine. You declared a state of emergency. What is the situation, as you see it now?

GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE (R), NEW JERSEY: Well, as you just heard in the forecast, John, we got some good news overnight that the storm was tracking a little further east, which will mean less water.

We still expect in our three southernmost counties, where we did declare a state of emergency, Cape May, Atlantic and Ocean counties, that we will still have moderate flooding starting later today -- later today into tomorrow, because of the slow-moving nature of the storm.

But, so far, unless it makes a turn back west, which these storms always can do, unless that happens, I think that we are going to look at moderate flooding, rather than a very severe impact.

DICKERSON: All right, let`s switch now to politics.

You helped set up the meeting this week between Donald Trump and the Mexican president. What was the point of that meeting?

CHRISTIE: Well, listen, I think that what Donald Trump wants to show everyone is that he will be a leader for all Americans. And he will be someone who is going to reach out, even when he has some disagreements with a foreign leader, to reach and out open dialogue.

And I think the words he used at the end of that meeting were very important, that he enjoyed the meeting, that he likes President Pena Nieto, and that he thinks they can work together to help improve the economies of Mexico and the United States.

All those things are very important. And I think those are things that they also stand for, which are that they`re going to fight for the people of their country. I don`t think anyone expected anything less from a President Trump or a President Pena Nieto, but I think the meeting was to make sure everybody understands that this is going to be a president who will work with our allies to make sure that lives of citizens in both countries improve over the next four years.

DICKERSON: So, after the meeting, Donald Trump then gave a speech in Arizona in which he said, "They don`t know it, but they`re going to pay for the wall." He was talking about Mexico.

After setting up a meeting to show this part of his character and building a relationship with Mexico, why say something like that to show that he`s dominating the Mexicans, or would as president? How does that work? Isn`t that a mixed message?

CHRISTIE: No.

No, John, I think he was just being candid. That`s one of the areas that obviously they disagree upon and are going to have to be topic of further discussion going forward. But I think what Donald was doing was being very candid with the American people about, this is one of the areas where they disagree.

This is the kind of transparency you get from Donald Trump, as opposed to what you get from Hillary Clinton, who hasn`t had a press conference in nearly 10 months, hides, doesn`t answer questions, except for high-dollar donors.

I mean, the fact is that Donald Trump is going to tell you exactly what he thinks. Sometimes, you will agree it. Sometimes, you won`t. But you will never have to wonder. Hillary Clinton, she`s the mystery woman of 2016. All we know is that she has told us she had one device, so that`s why she`s a private e-mail server, John.

And now we find out this week from the FBI 13 different mobile devices and five different iPads, most of which are now gone.

DICKERSON: The wall that Donald Trump was talking about, do you that is really going to happen, that Mexico is going to pay for it?

CHRISTIE: Listen, I think that Donald Trump has negotiated some extraordinary deals over the course of time in his career. And this will be another challenging deal for him to negotiate.

But I absolutely believe that is the way he sees it, and it will be part of an overall negotiation with Mexico to improve the economies in both countries and to make sure that the lives of the people in both countries are protected from drug-running and gun-running and illegal **immigration**, which is hurting both countries, John.

So, listen, I -- people have lost a lot of money so far in the last 16 months betting against Donald Trump.

DICKERSON: So, because the wall is such an important part of his candidacy, you said during the primaries, "This makes no sense," referring to the wall. "I have met President Pena Nieto a number of times. I don`t think if we present him with a bill, he`s going to pay for it."

So, were you wrong then?

CHRISTIE: Yes, I disagreed with Donald Trump at the time. Big shock. I was running against him, John. And so let`s pull out all the quotes where people who are now supporting Hillary Clinton disagreed with her during the primary as well, so we can be fair about this.

Of course I disagreed with him, because I was running against him.

(CROSSTALK)

DICKERSON: But do you think it`s possible now?

CHRISTIE: But, John, a lot of people -- John, a lot of people, a lot of people, myself included, have lost betting against Donald Trump.

And I think he`s going to be a very good negotiator for the American people, not only on this issue, but on trade deals that will help improve our economy to make the world safer and more secure.

DICKERSON: On the question of the 11 million undocumented, there`s been some confusion. And Donald Trump at one point said they would be leaving America so fast, it would make your head spin. Now he`s saying something that will be worked out.

In the way we have seen **immigration** talked about, that kind of softening, to use his word, usually is prelude to not ultimately dealing with all 11 million. That`s what it feels like here.

Why is that not the case? Why is this not basically moving away from his position he had in the primary?

CHRISTIE: Listen, we want -- we want candidates and leaders to listen, and if they hear new information or different information that leads them to conclude different things in their positions, we want them to do that, John. We don`t want people stuck in cement.

Be really clear. Donald Trump is going to get rid of very early on the two to three million criminals that are here illegally in this country. That will be priority number one. And once we remove those two to three million from the country, return them to their countries of origin because of their criminal conduct, then I think what Donald Trump wants to do is take a deep breath and look at where we are in the country then, and find out if you could find humane way to deal with those who remain.

And so I think what he`s talking about is a pause. After the two to three million get put out of the country because they`re committing crimes, hurting Americans, selling drugs, doing things that are illegal, once those people are dealt with first -- and I think everyone agrees on that issue -- then we can deal with the remaining eight million people.

That`s what Donald Trump wants to do. I think that is a humane way to deal with it. And I`m proud of the fact that he`s been willing to stand up and say what he really believes on this as he`s learned more about the topic.

DICKERSON: So, your point is that this is an evolution to a pause, which shows his -- his ability to adapt to changing information?

CHRISTIE: Absolutely.

And that`s something that Hillary Clinton will tell you Donald Trump can`t do. But what I will tell you about Hillary Clinton, John, is that she doesn`t evolve. We don`t even know if she evolves, because she doesn`t talk to anybody, except for mega-rich donors in the Hamptons and all over America, and Hollywood and the Hamptons are the two places where Hillary Clinton answers questions, not on shows like yours.

DICKERSON: I hear a line of attack there that might be used in the debate.

You`re a part of the debate prep with Donald Trump. You also went up against him. How much does he really need to prepare for debates?

CHRISTIE: Everybody needs to prepare, John.

I mean, you need to get ready. And Donald is taking that process very seriously. But, in the end, there`s nothing you can do in preparation that can hide the essence of who you are. The essence of who Donald Trump is, is an outspoken, aggressive, smart, successful businessman who is going to be a strong leader for our country.

The essence of Hillary Clinton is, she`s a political insider who over and over again has not told the truth to the American people and who thinks there`s a different set of rules that apply to her than everybody else.

And so you are not going to be able to hide that. No matter how many coaches she hires, John, to help her in debate prep, it`s not going to change the essence of who she has been and who she is. And that is what you are going to see in the debates on September 26.

DICKERSON: I want to ask you about a report in "Washington Post" this week about Donald Trump`s foundation paying a fine to the IRS for a $25,000 donation it had given to a political committee supporting Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi in 2013.

She was looking into maybe investigating Trump University, ultimately didn`t. Donald Trump has said he knew better than anybody how to use the system, how to use political donations to get the system to work for him.

Is that an instance of that in that situation, gave the money, then investigation didn`t happen?

CHRISTIE: I can`t believe, John, that anyone would insult Pam Bondi that way.

She`s an outstanding attorney general who has been reelected by the people of Florida. She`s somebody who has been an outstanding law enforcement officer and continues to be. And I can`t imagine that Pam Bondi would ever make decisions on that basis.

But what I will tell you is, we now know that Bill Clinton has taken over $16 million of taxpayer money to help to fund the Clinton Foundation, a foundation that essentially was the person and the group that was screening who would get to see the secretary of state.

If you wrote your multimillion-dollar check to the Clinton Foundation, then you got a visit with the secretary of state. There`s no doubt about what was going on there, John, same way there was no doubt that when Hillary Clinton said she had a private e-mail server for one device, so she could use one device, we now know from the FBI she had 13 devices, one of which was destroyed with a hammer by her staff.

Why were they hammering her cell phone, John? Let`s talk about the real issues of trust in this race. And the real issues of trust in this race -- and I can tell you this as a former prosecutor -- I`m stunned, given what I saw in the FBI files that were released Friday, that Hillary Clinton was not prosecuted.

DICKERSON: All right, Governor Christie, we have run out of time. Thanks so much for being with us.

CHRISTIE: John, I look forward to coming back. Thanks.

DICKERSON: Joining us now from Phoenix is Republican Senator Jeff Flake.

Senator, Donald Trump this week visited Mexico, met with the president there, and gave a very fiery speech in your state of Arizona. At the end of the week, what do you think the net result is of those two actions?

SEN. JEFF FLAKE (R), ARIZONA: Well, the speech in Mexico, and that action, I think all of us had some hope after that that he might be changing the tone and tenor of his campaign.

But then when the speech was delivered in Arizona later that day, he seemed to be right back where he has been.

DICKERSON: What`s your understanding of how he`s going to handle the estimated 11 million undocumented **immigrants** in America?

FLAKE: You know, that`s not clear at all.

You know, some people, as he said, said it was heartening. Some said softening. I say it was just confusing. There really isn`t any -- any clear indication of whether or not, for example, kids who are brought across the border when they were 2 years old, the so-called dreamers, whether they would be forced to go back to Mexico, and if there would be visa slots for them to return to the United States, if they so choose, later on.

So, it really is unclear right now.

DICKERSON: You have been part of the **immigration** discussion in Washington. You spent a lot much time on the issue.

With that experience and listening to the speech that Donald Trump gave in Arizona, how do you think his **immigration** plan which he plans to kick off the minute he gets in office, how would that be received in Washington? What would those early days and months of his administration be like?

FLAKE: Well, any serious **immigration** reform has to include four elements, obviously border security. Donald Trump has talked quite a bit about that.

Although, just really what element, building a wall and making Mexico pay for it, that is not a very serious policy in and of itself. But then you have got to talk about interior enforcement, having an E-Verify-style system to allow employers to know who they`re hiring.

And then you have got a robust temporary worker program, both for skilled and unskilled labor. He`s talked very little about that. And then the mechanism to deal with those who are here illegally now, and that has been just kind of muddied, at best.

DICKERSON: If you -- you talked about the tone and tenor of his campaign. We have had this conversation, you and I, before.

Since then, Donald Trump has made a bit of a pivot. He said he regretted some things. He`s tried to change his position on the undocumented workers. He`s also kind of layered over his view about not allowing new Muslim **immigration**. Have any of those moves done anything to change your thinking about him as a president?

FLAKE: Well, I would like to see him stick with some of those positions for awhile.

The ban on Muslims, he does seem to have walked back. He`s talking more about regions or visa vetting process. That seems to be better. I`m glad to see that.

With regard to **immigration**, he pivots, and then pivots right back, so it`s kind of a 360-degree pivot at times. So, I would like to see a firm position that he sticks with for awhile. And, obviously, I would like to see it a more realistic position in dealing with those who are here illegally now.

DICKERSON: You have said a version of that before. Given how long you have held this position, aren`t you really at a point of no return in terms of ever supporting him?

FLAKE: Well, it becomes increasingly difficult to see that he`s going to change.

So, I don`t expect that I will be able to support him in November. I would like to, but he`s the Republican nominee. I just don`t see how I can.

DICKERSON: And you have advised other Republican senators running, including John McCain in your state, to distance themselves from Donald Trump. John McCain in an ad appears to be doing that, saying he will be check against Hillary Clinton. Is he taking your advice?

FLAKE: No, I wouldn`t suggest he`s taking my advice, but he`s doing what I think Republicans need to do.

If we want the future of our party to be what it needs to be, we can`t associate with this kind of message and certainly with this kind of tone and the rhetoric that`s being used. Long term, I think that drives away young voters. It certainly drives away a lot of people in the minority community that we`re going to need moving ahead. So, I think John McCain and others are doing exactly what they need to do.

DICKERSON: Hillary Clinton has been saying that Donald Trump is not a part of the Republican Party. She`s been saying there are Republicans who are not like him.

Does actually help Republicans who are trying to win in the same year he`s running as president?

FLAKE: It probably does for anybody to say that.

For people to be reminded that this is not what the party stands for, I think, is a good thing. I wish more Republicans would say that as well, but if Hillary Clinton wants to say it, I`m glad people -- voters are being reminded of it anyway.

DICKERSON: And finally, quickly, Senator, Hillary Clinton is spending money in Arizona, thinks it`s competitive in the general election. Is that just trickery, or do you think Arizona is really up for grabs in the presidential contest?

FLAKE: It shouldn`t be up for grabs. Mitt Romney won it by I think, eight points. But, frankly, it is.

And I think that they`re spending money because they have some indication that she might be in play. And, unfortunately, I think that is the case.

DICKERSON: And is that just about Hispanic voters, or is there any other part of the vote that`s at play here?

FLAKE: No, it`s not. It`s not just about Hispanic voters.

I have always said that independent swing voters and others expect the major-party candidates to have serious policy proposals. And with regard to **immigration**, just saying that you`re going to build a wall and make Mexico pay is not a serious policy proposal. And I think most Arizonans know that.

DICKERSON: All right, Senator Jeff Flake, we appreciate you being with us. Thanks so much.

And we will be back in a minute.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: We`re back now to talk numbers, more from our CBS News Battleground Tracker poll.

We`re joined by CBS News director of elections Anthony Salvanto.

OK, Anthony, let`s walk through this slowly.

Thirteen, states we`re going to be obsessed with them on election night. They are where the race is taking place. Give us a sense where things now stand in those 13 battleground states.

ANTHONY SALVANTO, CBS NEWS ELECTIONS DIRECTOR: All right.

So, Clinton is still leading. And in that sense, the race is essentially unchanged. She is still leading among the same demographic groups that she`s been winning. But you look at her numbers underneath that lead, and she`s got historically high unfavorable ratings.

That hasn`t changed either. So, some things that haven`t changed aren`t good news for her. We haven`t seen in that polling from a front-runner before. And what that does is, it introduces a little bit of uncertainty still in this race, because then voters say that they feel like they`re settling, like they don`t really like either choice, they have picked a front-runner, but they`re settling for a choice, rather than making an affirmative choice.

And that leaves things, I think, still a little bit up in the air.

DICKERSON: So, this is not an act of joy. They`re just kind of -- it`s a bit more grudging.

So, let`s just recapitulate maybe for people who haven`t been paying attention what the fragility is of Hillary Clinton`s lead. What is underneath that is weak about her?

SALVANTO: She still has persistent issues on trust, on telling the truth and some of it stems from the e-mail server.

People say in this poll that they feel like her answers to that are getting less believable over time, not more so. But to really understand this from public opinion, John, I think you have to lather that up to the bigger picture.

In polling, people consistently say like they feel in America today that there are two sets of rules, one for them and one for people who have special advantages.

And it seems like the e-mail server is just reminding people of what they don`t like and what they don`t like about politics as usual. And then you see that and it bleeds into some of her other numbers, where people say like they feel like she is running on behalf of big donors, rather than trying to help them or help the country, and even more so that she`s running just because she wants to help herself, rather than them.

And that`s where it spreads out and makes her numbers weaker.

DICKERSON: Right, spreads out to a bigger issue than just about specific e-mails.

Let`s talk about Donald Trump big challenges. He`s been trying to fix them. What`s his big challenge and how he`s been trying to fix it?

SALVANTO: Well, you know, you look at his numbers among minority voters, they are low, and they haven`t moved just yet.

But you wonder if too that some of these appeals to minority voters are also a signal to those reluctant Republicans that we have seen in the polling throughout this who worry. And they tell us they worry that his appeal is based on racial division. They don`t like that. They`re not as moved even by the **immigration** issue as well.

But you see the balancing that he has. This week, more people said that they felt his **immigration** policies were staying the same, but conservatives who felt like they were changing, like they were becoming easier on people in the country illegally, got a little less enthusiastic about Trump. So, that that is that balancing act he`s got.

DICKERSON: Well, this is what is so interesting.

So, this question on **immigration**, it`s the signature policy of Donald Trump. When Chris Christie says that he`s going to take a pause about the 11 million undocumented, that would seem to be a message to those reluctant Republicans you were talking about that Donald Trump can change his mind, that he`s not doctrinaire.

And yet, on the other hand, you have said that there are those conservatives who have always been with him who are always skeptical of presidents who are -- or candidates who are softening, who are changing their mind on that kind of thing.

SALVANTO: Yes.

DICKERSON: And so let`s step back look at the big picture then, the state of the map. What does it look like?

SALVANTO: Well, for Hillary Clinton, she`s leading in enough states -- and we have gone through over the week state by state -- that she`s got enough of a cushion in the states that she can even afford to drop a couple, to lose her lead in a couple, and still get elected.

We hear so much about battleground states like Ohio and Florida. She could even afford to lose them and still win, if she keeps the leads in some of these other places, like a North Carolina.

DICKERSON: And that`s because Democrats start with a group of states that are traditionally voting for Democrats. So, they have a bit of an advantage. And she`s doing well in enough broad states in these battleground states.

So, what does the path look like then for Donald Trump?

SALVANTO: Donald Trump has more challenges, quite frankly.

And it`s not just numerically, in that he has to pull back so many of these states. He`s got to win Florida. He`s got to win Ohio. Then he`s got to go and get the lead back in North Carolina and in Pennsylvania.

His path is narrower because, as you said, Republicans don`t start with as large a base of electoral votes. So, he`s got to pull back some of those Democratic states. And the good news for him, though, is these states are not that dissimilar. If he can change people`s minds, you would probably start to see a sequence of states start to move, not just one or two.

DICKERSON: All right. And you have added Arizona and Georgia to the mix, which are usually Republican states. That means a bigger map maybe for Hillary Clinton. We will see.

Thanks, Anthony. We will be seeing a lot of you this fall.

And we will continue to help inform our viewers about what is going on in the presidential race and out there in the battleground states.

For now, we will take a pause. We will be back in a moment.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: We have got a lot more ahead, but this programming note first.

Be sure to tune in next week for our special coverage of the 15th anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks. We will be talking to CIA Director John Brennan.

We will be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: Some of our CBS stations are leaving us now.

But, for most of you, we will be right back with a lot more FACE THE NATION, including an interview with former George W. Bush Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and our political panel.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: Welcome back to FACE THE NATION. I`m John Dickerson.

Joining us now is former attorney general Alberto Gonzales. He is out with new book. It`s called "True Faith and Allegiance," a story of service and sacrifice in war and peace about his life and time serving the George W. Bush administration.

Welcome.

I want to start with the scene where you were briefly the one administration official to be off in a secret location. Tell us first a little bit about that experience. And then you said it gave you new appreciation for the presidency. How so?

ALBERTO GONZALES, FORMER ATTORNEY GENERAL: Well, of course, every year one cabinet official is asked to stay away --

DICKERSON: During the State of the Union.

GONZALES: During the State of the Union in case there`s a disaster and someone in the line of presidential succession is still alive to become president of the United States. And in 2007, I was advised just days before the State of the Union that I would be that person. And so I spent that evening on an airplane flying around. And I remember thinking, watching President Bush give the address that evening, and I would -- and I`ve advise President Bush through something like 50 federal and state executions, through two wars. So I`ve experienced a pretty big -- big moments with him before. But sitting on that airplane, it suddenly hit me, oh, my gosh, if something happened in Washington, would I and the people on that airplane be -- be -- be able to govern a wounded nation? The president get -- finishes his speech. We`re ordered to go -- headed back to Andrews Air Force Base and we land and I -- I really had an appreciation of -- of the tremendous pressure and power the opportunity to be president of the United States was really kind of -- kind of special.

DICKERSON: Yes. Well, we`re -- and we`re in the middle of a campaign where people are imaging the candidates stepping into that role --

GONZALES: Right.

DICKERSON: That you stepped into for, you know, 45 minutes or however long the -- the speech was. You -- you`ve said that it takes a special kind of person to be president.

GONZALES: Absolutely.

DICKERSON: What do you mean by that?

GONZALES: You know, looking at -- at -- at the president make decisions about who should go on the Supreme Court, or the decision to send men and women into battle, I think it takes someone with a great deal of integrity. And I can -- I think of very few jobs or vocations where integrity matters most. The American people want to know that the person, the most powerful person in the world, is constrained by the Constitution and not use that office for personal or political gain. It takes someone with wisdom. No one is born with wisdom. It comes from experience. So it`s a -- I think wisdom is very, very important.

It also takes someone with vision, a positive vision for America. Someone who can say, come with me. I can take you to a better place. I think I`m -- American want to believe in someone who believes in them. And so -- and courage. You know, the -- the office is about decision making -- I heard President Bush say this often -- and you have to have the courage to make the tough decisions because at the end of the day, you know, that`s what the American people expect is -- is you to make the right decision, to be bold and address the problems of this country.

DICKERSON: And so you`re a Republican. Does Donald Trump have those qualities you just outlined?

GONZALES: Well, I`m still -- I`m still evaluating Donald --

DICKERSON: It`s been 15 months. What`s to evaluate?

GONZALES: He`s -- well, because he shifts positions from time to time and, you know, I don`t -- I don`t know Donald Trump. I don`t think I`ve ever met Donald Trump. And so I think being able to -- to know someone takes some time. And -- and I -- I know there are lot of good people that I that I trust and know who are not supporting him and what it tells me is that I need to study this man very, very closely. I don`t think Americans should make a decision based upon the recommendations of anyone else. For example, if I today said, don`t -- I don`t support Donald Trump, or I do support Donald Trump, I -- I wouldn`t expect other Americans to -- to follow my lead. I would expect them to do their own investigation, evaluation as to whether or not this is the right person for them and their families and to lead this country.

DICKERSON: Based on those criteria you outline and that you outline in the -- in the book, "True Faith and Allegiance."

Let me ask you another thing you said about Donald Trump`s comments about Mexico, because he went and made the trip this week. Donald Trump said, just to remind people, they bring drugs, they bring crime, they`re rapists. In response to that you said, "you can`t unring that bell." What does that mean?

GONZALES: Well, I mean, there are consequences for words of -- when a president makes a statement. And I talk -- I talk about that in the book in terms of, once -- once the president makes -- makes a statement, it`s very, very difficult to walk that back. And so I think someone in the Oval Office has to be very careful about the words they say because they are -- there are consequences. And, quite frankly, there should be consequences. When the president draws a red line in the sand and says, if you go beyond that there will be consequences. There can be no doubt in any minds of our enemies that we -- that we intend to follow up and -- and that there will be consequences. So the words are very important from someone who sits in the Oval Office.

DICKERSON: Let me ask you about an anecdote in the book that got a lot of attention at the time. It was March of 2004. John Ashcroft was the attorney general. You`re council to the president. There`s a scene in his hospital room --

GONZALES: Yes.

DICKERSON: Where you`re trying to get an extension for the warrantless wiretapping program.

GONZALES: Yes.

DICKERSON: And there had been different stories told about this. Director Comey, now director of the FBI, says that you and Andy Card were there to try and, as he put it, take advantage of a very sick man.

GONZALES: Right.

DICKERSON: You tell your version of the story --

GONZALES: Yes.

DICKERSON: Of what happened in the hospital room, trying to get that extension. What -- how did it go as you saw it?

GONZALES: Well, you`re right, I did -- I spent some time in the book talking about this. And I`ll just say that I testified under oath about what happened in that hospital room. And the inspector general of the Department of Justice also spoke to me about what happened in that hospital room. And so I am -- I am on record, under oath about what happened and no one has -- has contested my description of what happened.

Listen, Andy Card and I spoke twice -- two times before entering that hospital room about our concern that he might not be competent and --

DICKERSON: The attorney general, John Ashcroft, who had just had surgery.

GONZALES: John Ashcroft, who had just had surgery. And if he wasn`t competent, then we were not going to ask him to -- to do anything. We were primarily there to report on a leader -- on a meeting we had just had with congressional leaders about this very same program and about the -- about the dispute and the congressional leaders telling us we -- we believe it should go forward with the program.

DICKERSON: Continue the program.

GONZALES: Because it is so important in protecting American lives. And, of course, the very next day we had the Madrid train bombings. It was a very dangerous time for our country and we were trying to do what we could to insure that we had the tools necessary to protect America.

DICKERSON: In terms of the warrantless wiretapping and then also enhanced interrogation, which you oversaw as -- as well.

GONZALES: Well, I didn`t -- I didn`t oversee it.

DICKERSON: But --

GONZALES: This was -- this --

DICKERSON: You advised on it as -- in your capacity with the president.

GONZALES: Well, I was counsel to the president, but the advice came from the Department of Justice, the senior leadership at the department, and the lawyers within the administration saying, done a certain way, it would be effective, and it would -- and it would be lawful.

DICKERSON: And I apologize. Not an unimportant fact. But how do you feel looking back on both of those things? Both of those policies have been changed. In the Republican race right now there are some -- well, Donald Trump is saying, bring back waterboarding. It would be great. What do you feel about that?

GONZALES: I think we -- we should only be doing those things that are absolutely necessary and effective and lawful. And the question --

DICKERSON: Was that true of enhanced interrogation techniques?

GONZALES: Absolutely. That it was effective and we`ve had testimony by -- by folks from the CIA and the FBI talking about information that we got from the program. And at that time, the Department of Justice issued an opinion that if -- if waterboarding, for example, was done under certain supervision, and it was only done to three people, high level detainees who we believe had information about a pending attack against the United States, that it would be lawful. And so this was, you know, obviously, very, very controversial. And I -- I don`t mean in this book to try to convince anyone who believes that waterboarding wasn`t torture that it wasn`t torture. I merely meant to point out that -- that the lawyers worked very, very hard to get this right, to -- to ensure that the -- that the CIA and the policymakers had the tools that they believe was necessary protect this country.

DICKERSON: But just very briefly, parting shot -- question here. Your view now, if it were to come back, there`s a legal pathway to bring waterboarding back or is that closed?

GONZALES: Would -- would I support it? I`d have to want to talk to the CIA folks to say, first of all, what is the threat? If, in fact, someone has information about a bomb that`s about to go off in Washington, D.C., in the next -- next half hour and we know some -- we have someone in custody that we know has information about that -- even Chuck Schumer said, in that kind of scenario, Senator Chuck Schumer from New York said, yes, he would authorize torture, assuming, again, I`m not suggest that it would be torture as a -- as a legal matter, but that would be a tool that I think we should pursue under those -- under certain kind of circumstances.

DICKERSON: All right, Alberto Gonzales. The book is "True Faith and Allegiance." Thanks very much.

GONZALES: Thanks, John.

DICKERSON: We`ll be right back with our panel.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: Joining us now for political analysis, Susan Page is "USA Today`s" Washington bureau chief, Jamelle Bouie is chief political correspondent for "Slate" magazine, and he`s a CBS News political analyst, Molly Ball covers politics for "The Atlantic," and Ramesh Ponnuru is a senior editor at "The National Review" and a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Ramesh, I want to start with you.

At the end of the week, Donald Trump has been to Mexico, met with the Mexican president. He also gave a zesty speech in Arizona in the same day. Do the calculation. Where do things stand at the end of the week with Donald Trump and **immigration**?

RAMESH PONNURU, "THE NATIONAL REVIEW": Well, I think that it is a confusing story. Today, on the airwaves, Trump supporters Chris Christie on this show and Rudy Giuliani are saying, he has softened on **immigration**, he`s no long for mass deportation, and this story is not getting through. Well, one of the reasons it`s not getting through is that Trump didn`t actually say that mass deportation is not on the table any more. He simply implied it. And he did it in a speech that was -- that was all of the -- all of the atmospherics of it were extremely hard line. It`s a speech that actually reads differently than it looks. And I don`t see how the -- the Trump campaign expects that it is going to get credit for softening, which it clearly wants, if it won`t actually come out and make that message more explicit.

DICKERSON: Molly, I was surprised that Chris Christie used the word "pause." I mean Donald Trump, during the primary, said the undocumented **immigrants** in America will be out so fast your head will spin. That is very different than the word "pause."

MOLLY BALL, "THE ATLANTIC": It is. Look, there`s been a lot of attempts to muddy the water, but I really think that a decision was made when Trump gave that **immigration** speech that he cannot walk back. And as Ramesh was saying, the decision was made to cast this issue in very harsh terms, to continue to depict illegal **immigrants** as criminals and as a danger to this country. And so whatever policy is in the fine print, and I don`t think we will ever know that because he`s taken all of the positions at once in a way, but the tone of that speech, I think, really closed a door for Trump with some voters who were looking for him to be more compassionate, to strike a tone more of acceptance, no matter what policy he`s advocating, I think, with certain Hispanic voters and certain non-Hispanic voters, there might have been an open door and that door was closed by the decision that Trump made to give that speech.

DICKERSON: Jamelle, who are those voters that -- that he`s trying to -- Donald Trump`s trying to appeal to with this softening, whatever we want to call it, if -- whether it exists or doesn`t exist.

JAMELLE BOUIE, CBS NEWS POLITICAL ANALYST: I think it`s whatever percentage of voters, Republican voters, that are staying away from states like Arizona and Georgia and North Carolina. North Carolina, Mitt Romney won that by a slim margin in 2012. And it`s pretty much a must win state for Donald Trump. And I think that margin is mostly the result of Republican voters who were just staying away. And you have all these activated, energized Democratic voters who are sort of taking their place. So as long as Trump is losing that group, which is college educated, which is suburban, which is predominants (ph) in states like Virginia, Colorado, is important in Pennsylvania, as long as Trump is losing that group of voters, then his path to 270 electoral votes is very narrow, if increasingly nonexistent.

SUSAN PAGE, "USA TODAY": You know it`s interesting, if you look at most of the demographic groups, they are pretty stable from four years ago. And the one exception are college educated whites.

DICKERSON: Right.

PAGE: In the exit polls in 2012, college educated whites went Republican by 14 percentage points. And in the last Pew Research Center poll, which is a big respected poll, they went for Hillary Clinton by 14 percentage points. That is the kind of swing that I don`t think we`ve seen before with a big group in American politics since we started polling in the 1950s.

DICKERSON: Meaning she`s up by 14 there.

PAGE: He`s up by 14, whereas Barack Obama lost them by 14 points just four years ago. Think of what -- a big swing that is among college educated whites. A huge part of the U.S. population, a huge part of the electorate in just four years.

I was talking to political scientist this week -- this week, Alan Abramowitz (ph) at Emery, who spends a lot of time looking at these questions. We couldn`t come up with another example of that kind of swing since 1952 when we started to be able to look by the -- at the demographics of presidential elections.

BALL: Well, and the gamble of the Trump campaign is that he is realigning the electorate to make up for that swing by attracting more non-college educated white voters and a lot of Democrats. But we haven`t seen him do that.

BOUIE: Right.

PONNURU: Yes.

BALL: What -- as you say, all the other groups are stable.

PONNURU: You mention Abramowitz. He has a model of election returns that predicts, based on the economy, based on these variables, Trump should win, Clinton should lose, but he doesn`t actually think that`s going to happen because Trump has run such a different kind of campaign that has scrambled the electorate in that way.

DICKERSON: Jamelle, do you think, going back to this point that Molly was making about realigning the electorate, if that`s your take, then wouldn`t you not need to do the softening, because you`re realigning? Is -- in other words, do you see in the softening undermining this notion that there`s a huge group of people out there?

BOUIE: Right. I mean a softening I think is de facto evidence if this group of people isn`t there or if it`s not -- it`s not large enough to make up for the voters you`re losing. I think the original theory was that Trump could have this hard line message and begin to pull non-college educated whites and specifically non-college educated white men from Democrats, those who aren`t voting, pull them into the electorate. But what`s happened is basically, yes, you have this action, reactivating a bunch of these voters, but you have a reaction, too, from college educated whites, from African-Americans, from Latinos, and the reaction is essentially overwhelming the action. And Trump -- the Trump campaign is now trying to figure out how it can mitigate the reaction, but I just don`t think it has time to do so at this point.

DICKERSON: Is this, Molly, what you saw in this visit to the Detroit church, this is also a part of this effort and where do we think that -- is it going to be successful, meaningful? Is it all about -- it is about African-Americans or is it about this group of college educated voters that we`ve been talking about?

BALL: If there is a political calculation, and I think that`s always an if with Trump and his campaign because so much of it is so improvisational and sort of based on the gut. But if there is a calculation, it probably is much more about those white swing voters.

On the other hand, you know, you see him getting zero or one or two percent of the African-American vote in these polls. There may literally be nowhere to go but up for Donald Trump. And those images where he at least seems to be making contact and listening to African-Americans could give him some lift there. But it does seem to be mostly about the predominantly white portion of the electorate that looks at him and believes that he`s a racist, that he`s intolerant, that he`s hateful and wants to be reassured. They -- they -- these people want to vote for the Republican.

BOUIE: Right.

BALL: They want to vote for the person with the "R" next to his name, and that`s why, I think, Trump still has some upside, but he needs to convince them that they -- that they can do that.

BOUIE: And there`s some -- there`s some good political science that notes that part of the gender gap in presidential election is essentially a function of white racial views. That women tend to have softer and less conservative racial views than men do. And when they see candidates who are hard line or seemingly hard line on racial issues, they react very negatively. And so George W. Bush, for example, did better than you would expect among white college educated women, in part because his brand, as it were, was a Republican with more liberal racial views you`re your typical Republican.

DICKERSON: Ramesh, let me ask you a question about how to fix this brand issue, because you can`t do it in one event and yet when Donald Trump went to meet with the president of Mexico, the word "presidential" got thrown around a lot. I`m going to apply to the wisdom of the group here. What does it mean to be presidential in a campaign context? What`s the real benefit of presidential?

PONNURU: If you look at the breakdown in that North Carolina poll from CBS, a majority of North Carolina voters don`t believe that Donald Trump is ready to be commander in chief. That is what it means. That is, I think, the central problem of this candidacy. People dislike him. People dislike her. But they think she is ready to be commander in chief. They don`t believe that he is. That I think is when we`re talking about presidential, when we`re talking about gravitas, changing his image, that`s the key thing he has to do.

DICKERSON: And can you do it, though, Susan, in who -- you`ve been to many of those -- those kinds of presidential moments, but can you do it in a -- just standing up there and -- and having a -- the image? Is that good enough?

PAGE: Well, I think that, and combined with the good performance in debates, is probably good enough, because you, in fact, have an electorate that wants to vote against Hillary Clinton --

DICKERSON: Yes.

PAGE: Because they don`t think she`s honest and trustworthy, because they`re ready for change after eight years of a Democratic administration. But Donald Trump, at least so far, has not gotten over the hurdle of looking like you can trust him to be commander in chief. That doesn`t -- I say -- I don`t think you could say there was no time left for him to do this because despite all the disadvantages that we`ve talked about so far for Donald Trump, he`s still within striking distance. In your national poll -- two points in your battleground states poll. That, you know -- and we`ve got, what, 65 days left?

DICKERSON: Right. Right. Well, you`ve given us a segue to talk about Hillary Clinton.

Jamelle, new information about her FBI interview. The numbers are very soft. In some polls they`re coming down. What is the state of Hillary Clinton`s campaign and -- I mean it`s now been several weeks that this comes up.

BOUIE: Right.

DICKERSON: It`s a bruise that keeps getting hit.

BOUIE: I pretty much think at this point you can tie Hillary Clinton`s fortunes and national polls to the tenor of her news coverage. When news coverage of Clinton is good or neutral, like just after the Democratic Convention, her poll numbers basically hit your 48, your 49 percent level, and she ends up establishing a seven or eight point lead over Trump. When the e-mails come in, when the foundation comes in, when these questions that remind people of all the things that they do not like about Hillary Clinton, that they do not like about the broader political world come in, her numbers immediately soften to 45, 44. And that`s basically been the story going back to even, you know, April and May. Her lead after the convention was very similar to her lead right at that time. The difference -- well, not the difference, but the same pattern happen. In April and May you had conversation about her e-mails and the foundation and her speeches and Bernie`s attacks, and it softened her to 44, 45. And I think it sort of -- it`s almost like a timing game that we`ll just see come November where she is in this cycle.

DICKERSON: Ramesh, did you take anything away from those FBI reports that is new or it just sort of the general issue that she has on this that will be with her all the way through to November?

PONNURU: There`s always another piece of evidence that tends to reinforce the public`s view that there is a lack of transparency, a lack of honesty, forthcomingness from Hillary Clinton. And I don`t think that story is about Clinton aides destroying phones with hammers is going to help her in any way. I -- I talked to a Republicans about this, a Republican strategists, who said, well, at least somebody`s keeping this race competitive.

DICKERSON: Molly.

PAGE: And yet a -- yet a big potential scandal involving Donald Trump, and I was glad you asked Chris Christie about it because I`m surprised it hasn`t gotten more attention, which is that Donald trump, in 2013, his foundation made an illegal $25,000 contribution to a campaign committee associated with the Florida attorney general, who was, at that time, deciding whether to pursue an investigation into Trump University. And this is the kind of thing -- he`s now paid a fine, which is -- as "The Washington Post" has reported. This is -- this should be a major story. And I`m perplexed by why it hasn`t gotten more attention. I think one reason is, there`s so much attention to her scandals and her credibility to make attacks on the -- on the front of honesty and trustworthiness are so low that it`s harder to get -- for her to generate outrage about this potential scandal involving him.

DICKERSON: Well, and also Donald --

PONNURU: It`s a good news cycles of the third party candidates, I think.

DICKERSON: Right.

Well, Donald Trump has also boasted about being able to do precisely that, give donations to get what he wants. I mean he hasn`t been shy about this. He hasn`t spoken directly to that thing, but he has said, that`s why the system`s so corrupt because I was a master at playing it.

PAGE: Yes.

DICKERSON: Molly, let me ask you about on Hillary Clinton. When she speaks, is that good for her campaign or bad no matter what the topic?

BALL: I think it depends. I -- I don`t think it is the case that every time she opened her mouth she makes things worse. And I -- she would hold a press conference, I think that whether or not she got herself into further trouble with her answers to questions, it would be refreshing to see her facing the press and answering questions. And, you know, she`s playing a very conventional campaign strategy where you spend your August fundraiser, and then you assume that the campaign engages in full after Labor Day. So I think we -- it`s safe to assume that we will see more of her doing public events and giving speeches after Labor Day.

DICKERSON: Jamelle, there -- she`s likely to give more policy speeches. Is that a way to beat back the criticism that she`s kind of disappeared during August --

BOUIE: Right.

DICKERSON: Raise a lot of money while she disappeared. But is that a way out of the fix she faces?

BOUIE: I`m not entirely sure because I think when it comes to Hillary Clinton`s public perception, people kind of just think that she -- she knows a lot, that she`s very prepared with regards to the policy. The things that people do not like or cannot believe about Hillary Clinton, they do not like that she`s secretive. They do not believe that she cares about people like them. And I`m not sure if more policy speeches will fix that latter problem. I don`t know if she needs to fix the former problem. Bill Clinton never ever really quite fixed the former problem about his trustworthiness, but he was able to convince people that he cared about them. And I think that`s Clinton`s challenge going forward.

DICKERSON: And it may be impossible to fix the first, the cares about you. She could, presumably, if she gave good enough speeches about solutions --

BOUIE: Right.

DICKERSON: That might work.

That`s it for us. Thank you all very much. We`ll be back in a moment. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: We turn now for a moment from the negativity of our presidential race to an event that has brought multitudes together in celebration. At the Vatican this morning, Mother Theresa was declared a saint and a mass for 120,000 people in St. Peter`s Square. Pope Francis praised the Albanian-born nun, who died 19 years ago, for dedicating her life to serving the poorest of the poor in Indian slums, calling on world leaders to end the crimes of poverty they themselves created. St. Theresa stood just five feet tall, but as a voice for the poor who often go unseen, she made an impact that could be seen across the world.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

DICKERSON: That`s it for us today. Thanks for watching. Join us next week when we`ll have CIA Director John Brennan.

For FACE THE NATION, I`m John Dickerson. Enjoy your Labor Day.